



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



MONDAY — 8 AUG 2022

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Events, Opportunities

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| HEADLINE | 08/08 Russians 'no longer able resist HIMARS' |
| SOURCE | https://www.newsweek.com/russia-ukraine-conflict-war-himars-counter-offensive-ivan-fedorov-1731633 |
| GIST | <p>The mayor of a city in Ukraine has said Ukrainian soldiers' efforts are causing difficulties for Russian forces ahead of a future counteroffensive.</p> <p>Ivan Fedorov, the mayor of Melitopol, took to Telegram on Monday morning to say that more than 100 Russian soldiers had been killed in recent attacks using "high-precision HIMARS [High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems]."</p> <p>He shared multiple videos alongside his message that appeared to show the missiles being fired. This comes as the war between Ukraine and Russia nears the 6-month mark following the decision by Russian President Vladimir Putin to invade the country.</p> <p>"Today, high-precision HIMARS missiles fired at the points of temporary deployment of the occupying forces at industrial sites in various districts of the city of Melitopol," he said in the Telegram post (translated by Google).</p> <p>Speaking to Newsweek, Fedorov said that one of the Russian bases targeted was an old military airport on the edge of the city, while the other was an old plant being used as a military warehouse.</p> <p>He added that Ukrainian forces were able to find out about the location of these bases through partisans in the city.</p> <p>In his Telegram message, he continued: "According to preliminary estimates, a significant amount of military equipment was destroyed. More than 100 Russian soldiers, who were in temporary barracks that night, received tickets to the Kobzon concert, and their parents are already choosing the model and color of the Lada car."</p> <p>The phrase buying "tickets to the Kobzon concert" has been used by Ukrainian soldiers and officials as a euphemism for Russians killed in the war in reference to Iosif Kobzon, a singer born in Ukraine but popular in Russia. He was dubbed the "Soviet Sinatra" and died in 2018, viewed by some Ukrainians as a traitor.</p> <p>The mention of the car refers to an interview in which grieving parents said they had bought a Lada with compensation money for the death of their son, killed in Ukraine, the online publication Ukrainian Pravda reported.</p> <p>Newsweek contacted the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Moscow has said on several occasions that it has destroyed HIMARS systems, but its claims have been unverified and have been dismissed by some Ukrainian and Western officials.</p> <p>Fedorov added that this attack would prove vital for future counterattacks against Russian forces. "Last week, the occupiers redeployed a significant part of air defense from Melitopol to Kherson," he added.</p> |

"Tonight is the most effective and shows that the existing enemy air defense units are no longer able to resist HIMARS.

"The weakening of the air defense system creates the necessary prerequisites for a successful counteroffensive in the direction of Melitopol."

He also added how integral HIMARS are proving in the fight against Russian forces.

"HIMARS are helping us very much. Since HIMARS started working in Ukraine, in Melitopol, we've destroyed many Russian positions," he told *Newsweek*.

Speaking on Russian morale, he added: "They don't want to make war. They don't want to stay in Melitopol.

"They want to come back to Russia but their generals say to them, 'stay, everything will be good.' But it's impossible for them to be good in Melitopol."

As the conflict edges closer to the 6-month mark there appears to be no clear end in sight.

However, one European politician, Nico Lange, a German lawmaker and chief of staff for the country's Federal Minister of Defense, has said Russia now faces "tremendous " difficulties.

Speaking to German public broadcaster Deutsche Welle (DW) over the weekend, he said the significant influx of military aid to Ukraine is changing the dynamic of the Russian invasion.

"The crucial aspect of the past few days is that Russia is now being forced to react to the Ukrainians' statements and actions," he said.

"Until now, it was the other way around; The Ukrainians were forced to react to everything Russia did.

Lange continued, saying that Russia has "moved significant forces to the south, toward both Kherson and Zaporizhzhia," two regions in Southern Ukraine that have mostly fallen under Russian occupation. They have also recently become the focus of significant counteroffensives by Ukrainian forces aiming to retake them.

"A Ukrainian attack will not look like the Russians': this rolling barrage that destroys everything in its path," Lange said. "Rather, it will also rely on partisans, on uprisings in the occupied cities, on mobile operations behind enemy lines."

He added: "The Russians are having great problems controlling these areas. There is a lot of partisan activity in the occupied part of Zaporizhzhia oblast.

"Russian patrols are being killed at night. In Melitopol, too, as in Kherson, there are posters directed against the Russian occupiers, there are leafleting campaigns. Something new is constantly being put up."

Russia is now unable to "escalate indefinitely" in Ukraine, Lange said, adding that the Russians are facing "tremendous" difficulty in continuing the conflict.

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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Monkeypox: Who at risk? Where next? |
| SOURCE | https://www.reuters.com/world/us/monkeypox-us-where-could-it-spread-next-2022-08-07/ |
| GIST | CHICAGO, Aug 7 (Reuters) - The United States declared monkeypox a public health emergency last week, an effort to bolster the U.S. response to contain the outbreak. |

The virus continues to be largely transmitted among gay and bisexual men, but experts say the disease could spill over into other populations, especially due to vaccine shortages. Monkeypox is spread by contact with puss-filled sores and is rarely fatal.

Here is the state of monkeypox now and some other the populations U.S. experts believe may be at risk:

WHO IS GETTING MONKEYPOX NOW?

Last month, the World Health Organization declared monkeypox a global public health emergency. So far, 80 countries where the virus is not endemic have reported 26,500 cases of monkeypox, according to a Reuters tally.

In the United States, 99.1% of U.S. monkeypox cases occurred among those assigned the male sex at birth as of July 25, according to a technical report by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Among male patients, 99% reported having sexual contact with other men.

About 38% of cases occurred in among white, non-Hispanic males. Another 26% were in Black males and 32% in Hispanic males.

The pattern of sexual transmission in men is not typical. In Africa, where monkeypox has been circulating since the 1970s, 60% of cases are in men, and 40% occur in women.

One reason may be that the virus appears to be "very efficiently transmitted through anal receptive intercourse and to some degree oral sex," said Dr. Celine Gounder, an infectious disease epidemiologist and an editor-at-large at Kaiser Health News.

WHO ELSE IS AT RISK?

Although the current explosion of cases has occurred in men, experts say there is no biological reason the virus will remain largely within the community of men who have sex with men.

"We certainly know it's going to spread to family members and to other non-male partners that people have," said Dr. Jay Varma, director of the Cornell Center for Pandemic Prevention and Response. He said the virus could also spread through massage parlors or spas.

The real question, he said, is whether it spreads as efficiently in those groups as it does among close sexual networks of men who have sex with men.

Experts point to the way HIV spread as a possible indicator for where the virus will go next.

"My greatest fear is that as we try to contain this, it's going to seep along the fractures in our social geography and go where HIV did, and that's going into communities of color in the rural South," said Dr. Gregg Gonsalves, an associate professor of epidemiology at Yale University and a leading HIV/AIDS activist.

Those are places with limited infrastructure for testing, vaccines and treatments.

Gounder is especially concerned about infections among Black women, who account for the largest share of new HIV infections in the United States, and already suffer significantly higher rates of maternal complications and deaths.

WHO ELSE MIGHT BE AT RISK?

Other at-risk settings include college dormitories, health clubs and sports teams.

Gounder is aware of some sports leagues that are preparing for possible infections, noting that sports such as wrestling involve close skin-to-skin contact.

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| | <p>Wrestling, football, rugby and other sports teams have previously had outbreaks of the superbug MRSA, according to the CDC.</p> <p>"I think it is something we need to be thinking about and prepared for," she said.</p> <p>Employers may also need to start preparing. Gounder said some theaters in New York, for example, are considering how they might protect their workers from possible monkeypox infections through contact with shared costumes.</p> <p>"We're still in the beginnings of that, but I am encouraged to see that some are already thinking about that."</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/08 Solomons leader snubs US WWII service |
| SOURCE | https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/solomons-leader-did-not-attend-us-war-memorial-service-snob-media-report-2022-08-08/ |
| GIST | <p>SYDNEY, Aug 8 (Reuters) - Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare did not attend a weekend dawn service for a key World War Two battle organised by the United States, with local media reporting it as a "snub".</p> <p>The Solomon Star News said Sogavare was due to give a speech at a memorial service that was attended by U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, and ministers and officials from Japan, Australia and New Zealand on Sunday, but he did not appear.</p> <p>Sherman told a news conference Sogavare was on the printed programme for the ceremony, which marked the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Guadalcanal, and when she met him later in the day, she told him she was sorry he didn't attend.</p> <p>"The real sorrow here is that I think he missed a real opportunity to commemorate how strong these bonds were 80 years ago that allowed for freedom here in Solomon Islands," she told reporters on Sunday, according to a transcript released on Monday.</p> <p>The U.S. ambassador to Australia, Caroline Kennedy, was also at the series of ceremonies and paid tribute to two Solomon Islanders who had saved the life of her father, John F. Kennedy, who later became U.S. president.</p> <p>Sherman said her meeting with Sogavare was wide ranging and "very bold", and she had raised U.S. concerns over his government's security pact with China.</p> <p>Honiara and Beijing have denied the pact will allow a military base.</p> <p>"The prime minister and I talked today about how there is no conflict in the Pacific right now, and we all want to keep it that way," she said.</p> <p>Sogavare's office did not respond to a Reuters request for comment.</p> <p>At a ceremony on Monday, Sherman praised the role of Solomon Islanders in assisting the United States in World War Two.</p> <p>A Japanese Navy sailor was stabbed during Monday's service at Bloody Ridge, a spokesman at the Japanese Embassy in the Solomon Islands confirmed to Reuters.</p> <p>The motivation for the attack was unknown. The victim was treated at the scene by U.S. military medics and needed two stitches, the spokesman added.</p> |

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| | The Solomon Star News reported a local man was in custody over the attack. |
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| HEADLINE | 08/08 Ukraine: hit Russia bases, key bridges |
| SOURCE | https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-says-it-hit-russian-troop-bases-key-bridges-overnight-strikes-2022-08-08/ |
| GIST | <p>KYIV, Aug 8 (Reuters) - Ukraine conducted long-range strikes on Russian troop bases and two key bridges across the Dnipro river overnight, Ukrainian officials said on Monday.</p> <p>The strikes hit the only two crossings Russia has to the pocket of southern Ukrainian territory it has occupied on the western bank of the vast Dnipro river, said Natalia Humeniuk, spokesperson for Ukraine's southern military command.</p> <p>"The results (of the strikes) are rather respectable, hits on the Antonivskyi and Kakhovskiy bridges," she said on television.</p> <p>Ukrainian HIMARS strikes also hit multiple military bases in Ukraine's Russian-occupied southern city of Melitopol in the early hours, killing troops and destroying hardware, the exiled mayor said.</p> <p>"According to preliminary estimates, a significant amount of military equipment was destroyed," Mayor Ivan Fedorov wrote on Telegram.</p> <p>Reuters could not immediately verify the officials' battlefield accounts.</p> <p>Ukraine's defence minister said two weeks ago that 50 Russian ammunition depots had been destroyed by U.S.-supplied HIMARS multiple rocket launchers, which Ukraine started using in June.</p> <p>Russia says it is waging a "special military operation" in Ukraine to rid it of nationalists and protect Russian-speaking communities. Ukraine and the West describe Russia's actions as unprovoked aggression.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/07 China's modern fighting force |
| SOURCE | https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-military-exercises-showcase-modern-fighting-force-preparing-for-possible-war-in-the-taiwan-strait-11659906152?mod=hp_lead_pos9 |
| GIST | <p>Four days of exercises around Taiwan offered a rare glimpse into China's progress toward its goal of prevailing in any major conflict, including against the U.S. in a potential war over the island.</p> <p>What the drills demonstrated, military analysts said, is the progress China has made coordinating different branches of its armed services, a hallmark of a modern military. China appeared to lack the military assets to impose a total blockade on Taiwan, they said, but Beijing showed it had enough maritime firepower to severely disrupt the island's economy.</p> <p>The exercises were seen as a particular success for the People's Liberation Army Eastern Theater Command, the main regional command responsible for Taiwan that was created in a military reorganization in 2016 to improve the ability to conduct joint operations, according to M. Taylor Fravel, a specialist on the Chinese military at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He also noted that the drills were one of the few times China has provided so much detail about an exercise.</p> <p>"The ability to conduct joint operations around Taiwan has been a driver of China's military strategy and force modernization for more than two decades," Mr. Fravel said. "We should not be surprised by what the PLA is doing, how it is doing it or what it has accomplished."</p> |

The last time China fought a war was a failed attempt in 1979 to defeat Vietnam in a three-week border clash. While this wasn't a conflict situation, the exercises served as a large-scale dress-rehearsal for any combat operations in the Taiwan Strait, one of the most dangerous flashpoints of the 21st century.

The drills also reaffirmed before the eyes of the world President Xi Jinping's intent to turn a sprawling military industrial complex into a cohesive fighting force that, one day, might dominate the Asia Pacific.

China's exercises featured fighter and bomber sorties, along with naval maneuvers, and they showcased what is believed to have been the first time China has launched missiles over the Island of Taiwan. The People's Liberation Army said Sunday it had conducted joint training in waters and airspace near the island to test its capacity for striking ground targets and engaging in long-range aerial combat.

The exercises kicked off as an angry Chinese government [protested the visit to Taipei earlier last week](#) by U.S. House Speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#).

The exercises started at noon on Thursday in six zones that effectively encircle Taiwan. Several of the zones face the island's biggest commercial ports and overlap with what Taipei claims as its territorial waters, coming within 12 miles of its coastline in what some military analysts have compared with a temporary blockade.

All the main services took part in the exercises, according to Chinese press reports, including the army, navy, air force, the rocket force and support and logistical forces.

The U.S. is Taiwan's longstanding security partner and is obliged by law to make sure Taiwan can defend itself. For decades, the U.S. has maintained a policy of strategic ambiguity not saying whether it would directly intervene in a conflict. Though the White House says that policy hasn't changed, President Biden has said the U.S. would defend Taiwan if China tried to invade. For its part, [Beijing viewed Mrs. Pelosi's visit](#) as another sign of the U.S. backtracking on previous commitments to limit ties with the island.

Since the end of last week, PLA officials haven't returned calls from their Pentagon counterparts, the Pentagon said.

"The PRC has chosen to overreact and use the Speaker's visit as a pretext to increase provocative military activity in and around the Taiwan Strait," Todd Breasseale, acting Pentagon spokesman, said in a statement. "Part of this overreaction has been strictly limiting its defense engagements when any responsible state would recognize that we need them now the most."

U.S. defense officials said it would be weeks before they will finish analyzing all the information they learned watching China's exercises, particularly how its navy maneuvers and commands its ships while conducting a joint operation with its air force.

In addition to surveying by air, the U.S. kept an aircraft carrier, the USS Ronald Reagan, and its accompanying ships in the region throughout the exercises.

A Beijing-backed group, South China Sea Strategic Situation Probing Initiative, said on its [Twitter](#) account that the U.S. deployed surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft to the area, including RC-135s, P-8s and E-3s, with KC-135 tankers on hand for midair refueling. The Pentagon declined to comment.

Military analysts say that while China deployed some of its latest weapons for the exercises there appeared to be no military hardware that wasn't already known about. And some said China didn't use enough ships to show they could impede ship traffic from reaching Taiwan.

Instead, it used ships like destroyers and cruisers during its exercise, which aren't ideal for conducting a blockade, naval observers said. Even though they exercised with as many as 50 ships, the Chinese navy

didn't use enough smaller, more agile ships, like frigates, that could better sustain something like a blockade around Taiwan, said Bryan Clark, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute.

"What we saw during the exercise is that China did not use enough ships to divert those coming in, inspect or hold them and cut off access to Taiwanese ports. They have enough to quickly inspect ships coming in and slow down the Taiwanese economy," Mr. Clark said. "This was more like a demonstration of a quarantine than showing they can cut off Taiwan. But for China, it would be a good first step."

Christopher Twomey, an associate professor of national security affairs at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif., said potentially useful intelligence that might be gained from the exercises included assessments of how missile brigades coordinated with each other and conducted evaluations of battle damage from the strikes. Such information could be obtained from intercepted communications, he said.

"Presumably the U.S. intelligence community is getting lots of material from these activities from classified sources about 'down in the weeds' capabilities and operational practices," Mr. Twomey said.

Several close observers of the Chinese military noted that the drills fell far short of a full rehearsal for an invasion of Taiwan, a self-ruled island that Beijing has said it would bring under its control. An attempt to seize and control the island would involve an amphibious invasion across the 100-mile wide Taiwan Strait, but there were no signs of the mobilization of amphibious forces during the latest exercises.

The Chinese exercises were likely preplanned for a scenario in which Beijing wanted to demonstrate its resolve to fight a war over Taiwan, said Thomas Shugart, a former U.S. submarine warfare officer and an adjunct senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security.

Mr. Shugart said China's decision to hold exercises for the first time within maritime areas that Taiwan considers its territorial waters shows that Beijing's military risk appetite had grown, but a true test of its ability to operate effectively as a single force would only come if it faced a response from Taiwanese or American forces.

"On balance, we are learning mostly about political intent: the Chinese are worried about the trend in U.S.-Taiwanese relations and their view that we are moving away from commitments made in the 1970s and reiterated by every administration since, that we don't support an independent Taiwan," Mr. Twomey said. "They are using military tools to communicate that there are military costs to these shifts in U.S. policy."

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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Continuing heat wave blankets parts of US |
| SOURCE | https://www.wsj.com/articles/high-temperatures-blanket-parts-of-u-s-amid-continuing-heat-wave-11659897830?mod=hp_listb_pos4 |
| GIST | <p>Dangerous heat gripped parts of the Pacific Northwest and central Plains Sunday, with temperatures in Portland, Ore., likely to top 100 degrees Fahrenheit, the National Weather Service said.</p> <p>High temperatures and humidity covered parts of the Northeast too, with a sweltering Boston extending its declaration of a weekend heat emergency into Monday.</p> <p>"I encourage residents to continue to utilize our cooling centers and splash pads, and to check on your neighbors," Boston Mayor Michelle Wu said in a statement.</p> <p>The Pacific Northwest has experienced higher-than-average summer temperatures over the past week, with Portland getting the worst of it over the weekend, NWS said.</p> <p>On Monday and Tuesday, the heat wave will move to the interior parts of Oregon, Washington and Idaho, leaving behind cooler temperatures in the low 90s to high 80s for Portland and Seattle, according to NWS meteorologist Marty Rausch.</p> |

By midweek, the northern and central Plains will experience broiling heat, with temperatures in parts of Montana and the Dakotas possibly reaching the high 90s and into triple digits by Thursday or Friday, Mr. Rausch said.

At the same time, a cooling pattern will settle over much of the Northeast, bringing a welcome break at the end of the week to the dense heat and humidity that has enveloped the region for much of the past month.

Extreme weather patterns have been the norm this summer in most of the country, bringing record-breaking high temperatures to some places and contributing to deadly flash floods and wildfires to others.

Eastern Kentucky, recently ravaged by flash flooding that left at least 37 dead and hundreds displaced, got more rain over the weekend, the NWS said.

The NWS issued an extended flood watch through 10 p.m. ET on Sunday, and said thunderstorms are likely to pass through parts of the region this week.

Flash floods could occur, especially if several storms hit the same area, the NWS said.

In California, firefighters have struggled to contain out-of-control wildfires, fed by tinder-dry conditions caused by low humidity and erratic winds. The Golden State is currently battling the McKinney Fire, which erupted July 29 and has scorched more than 60,000 acres to date. At 40% contained as of Sunday, the McKinney Fire is the state's largest wildfire of the year.

Flash floods also hit California's Death Valley National Park on Friday, due to a downpour that buried cars in debris, closed roads and left hundreds of visitors and workers stranded for several hours.

The park sits along the California-Nevada border and features a below sea-level basin that is the lowest point in North America. Average rainfall for the area is less than 2 inches a year, according to the National Park Service. On Friday, the Furnace Creek area of the park saw sudden rainfall of 1.46 inches, sparking intense flash flooding that closed roads and kept roughly 500 workers and 500 visitors captive until an exit could be cleared.

All Death Valley National Park roads remain closed to the public, a spokeswoman said in an email Saturday.

The California Department of Transportation has said it hopes to reopen Highway 190, which runs between Death Valley Junction and Furnace Creek, by Tuesday, the spokeswoman said.

"We are still assessing the extent of damage on park roads, and will be working to open them to the public as soon as we safely can. In areas with extensive asphalt damage, this will take time," the spokeswoman said in her email.

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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Fauci in Seattle, receives Hutch Award |
| SOURCE | https://mynorthwest.com/3585560/fauci-awarded-hutch-award-throw-ceremonial-first-pitch-aug-9/ |
| GIST | <p>Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, the Chief Medical Advisor to the President, has been named the recipient of the 2022 honorary Hutch Award. Fauci will accept the award in an on-field ceremony before the Mariners' game Aug. 9 at T-Mobile Park before he throws out the ceremonial first pitch.</p> <p>"He has demonstrated fearless leadership and dedication to our country," the Fred Hutch organization wrote in a prepared statement. "We are honored to present him with this award in recognition of his decades of service to public health, unwavering belief in the power of science, and tireless efforts throughout the COVID-19 pandemic."</p> |

Fauci will join Dr. Lawrence Corey, the president and director emeritus of Fred Hutch Cancer Research Center for a fireside chat before the festivities at T-Mobile Park begin, covering a range of topics from HIV to pandemic preparedness.

“Given the pair’s longstanding friendship, I expect it will be a lively, illuminating conversation,” the statement continued. “The conversation will be livestreamed for the rest of our community of supporters on our YouTube channel and archived for later viewing.”

Fauci has served as the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases for nearly 40 years.

Created in 1965 in honor of the late Fred Hutchinson, the Hutch Award typically honors baseball greats who contribute to communities outside of the baseball diamond. Dee Gordon won the 55th Hutch Award for his involvement with Food for the Hungry, Striking Out Poverty, Boys & Girls Clubs, Seattle Children’s, Make-A-Wish Foundation, and Mariners Care. He also brought his Flash of Hope program to Seattle when he played for the Mariners from 2018 to 2020.

“Dr. Fauci embodies the steadfast and fearless leadership that made the Hutch Award’s namesake a pillar of Major League Baseball,” the prepared statement continued. “He joins former President Jimmy Carter as the only people to receive an honorary Hutch Award.”

This is not Fauci’s first time on the mound, as he threw out ceremonial first pitches twice before recently, once in 2017 and again in 2020.

His 2020 pitch did not go quite as planned.

Here’s hoping he’s worked on his throwing motion and improved his accuracy.

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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Iraq heat wave cripples power grid |
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| SOURCE | https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/07/baghdad-heat-record/ |
| GIST | <p>BAGHDAD — Extreme heat is paralyzing Iraq, forcing shutdowns in the overstretched power grid as authorities extend public holidays to protect employees from 125-degree temperatures.</p> <p>Iraq ranks fifth on the list of countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and it is heating faster than much of the globe. Almost 20 years after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, the country is ill-equipped to cope with the strain.</p> <p>In the southern provinces of Basra, Dhi Qar and Maysan, authorities said Saturday that the electricity grid had lost power for a second night in a row, plunging millions of homes into darkness through the sweltering night. Food spoiled in fridges. Parents put their children in the car and drove for hours — the air conditioning in their vehicles was the only way to stay cool.</p> <p>By Sunday morning, the governor of Dhi Qar province, one of the poorest in Iraq, said that a public holiday for state employees would be extended until the religious festival of Muharram begins Tuesday, “due to the noticeable rise in temperatures.”</p> <p>Ten months after populist cleric Moqtada al-Sadr won the largest number of seats in parliamentary elections here, politicians from the country’s Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish blocs are fighting bitterly over the shape of a new government. As a result, no budget has been passed and major spending decisions are on hold.</p> <p>But as forecasts indicated that most Iraqi provinces were likely to witness temperatures of around 120 degrees or higher this week, the electricity grid is not the only public service faltering.</p> |

Farming and fishing, two crucial pillars in the state's attempts to move away from reliance on oil revenue, are being pummeled by drought. Overstretched hospitals are treating cases of heatstroke or breathing difficulties that have probably been worsened by toxic fumes trapped in the air, doctors say.

On Baghdad's streets Sunday, young boys hawked water from ice boxes, sparing their faces from the sun with sweat-soaked scarves. Veteran traffic police said their job was getting harder and harder. "I've done this for 16 years," said Falah Nouri, 37, as he rested on a battered sidewalk by the Tigris River. "It's not just the sun. It's the fumes and how the concrete heats beneath our feet."

He said that his soles had been burned and that he was wearing shoes recommended by his doctor as a result. "He wants me to take time off, but how do I get time off? We need to work," the policeman said, exasperated.

At midday in many neighborhoods, one noise was missing from the usual din: the sound of construction. Although day laborers often continue Baghdad's building boom throughout the summer, this time it was just too hot. On the usually verdant Abu Nawas Street, one construction worker looked delirious from the heat as he slumped against a desiccated tree. There was no shade in sight.

With government power systems faltering across Iraq, sites ranging from state ministries to family homes rely on privately run backup generators and the army of operators who work in hot, dark trailers around the clock to keep them going.

But these pose their own risks. Powered by diesel fuel, they belch toxic fumes into the air, experts say, and customers are forced to pay exorbitant prices for the electricity to the unaccountable and often corrupt businessmen who own the machines.

In Baghdad's southeastern Zafraniya district, Habib Abdul Khadim, 49, could barely make his voice heard above his generator's shuddering roar. "We're melting here!" he shouted. "Me and 40 million other Iraqis, we're melting."

The heat was oppressive inside his little office, and he said that the fumes seemed to be creating a sort of film across his eyes.

All around, the district was suffering. On his office wall, lists of families now in debt for their electricity supply were growing longer. Inside his home, his newborn grandson, Adam, was crying as he struggled to breathe.

"Every year we think it can't get worse, but then the summer surprises us," Abdul Khadim said. He looked exhausted.

In the summer months, Baghdad's heat ebbs only when a dust storm rolls in, blanketing the city with particles of sand and earth loosened by the wind as Baghdad's green belt dries up. This summer, thousands of people have been hospitalized with breathing problems as a result. There isn't much the doctors can do.

"We just give them hydrocortisone and some time away from the storm," said Saif Ali on a recent day, the beds in his emergency room still sandy from the feet of his patients. "It's getting worse every year, though."

Iraq's combination of rising heat and water shortages caused by climate change, mismanagement and diminished upstream flows has caused unrest in the past. In the south, the conditions are forcing families from their farmlands and into cities, where tensions with longtime residents are growing amid dwindling resources.

In the city of Basra, where residents braced themselves Sunday for another night without power, pollution and toxic waste contaminated the entire city's water supply in 2018, causing more than 100,000 people to be hospitalized with abdominal pain, vomiting, and diarrhea.

Large protests followed, but authorities crushed them with deadly force.

Across Iraq, small demonstrations decrying poor services in the face of extreme heat take place weekly. In Iraq's marshlands — some of them now cracked beds of earth in place of the silvery pools where the Garden of Eden is said to have stood — a protester's sign last month expressed the misery.

"If you ask me about the condition of my land, I will tell you," it read. "Drought, poverty, forced migration, violence."

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| HEADLINE | 08/06 TSA: guns, knives airport checkpoints |
| SOURCE | https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/transportation/tsa-officers-continue-to-stop-guns-and-knives-at-airport-checkpoints/ |
| GIST | <p>Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officers have prevented three individuals from bringing loaded guns past the security checkpoints at Philadelphia International Airport in the past five days.</p> <p>First, TSA officers stopped a Millville, N.J., man from carrying a revolver and five knives onto his flight on July 30. The Cumberland County resident was cited by the police. TSA then stopped a man from Eagles Mere, Pa., in Sullivan County, Pa., with a 9 mm handgun on August 2. The man had been issued a gate pass from the airline to escort his young daughter to her gate when he was caught with his gun and was arrested by police. Then on August 3, a woman from Reading, Pa., who was carrying an unloaded 9mm handgun, was also caught by TSA with her gun. She was cited by the police.</p> <p>When the TSA officers spotted the guns in the checkpoint X-ray machine, the Philadelphia Police were alerted, confiscated the guns and detained the individuals for questioning before citing or arresting them. In each incident, TSA forwarded the incidents to be followed up with the issuance of a federal financial civil penalty.</p> <p>"Three guns in five days is an epidemic. Bringing deadly weapons such as handguns to a security checkpoint is a very serious offense," said Gerardo Spero, TSA's Federal Security Director for Philadelphia International Airport. "Individuals are responsible for everything in their possession that they are carrying through a security checkpoint and there are severe consequences for bringing guns to a checkpoint. Not only do these three individuals face criminal charges, but they also will be receiving financial civil penalties for bringing a deadly weapon to a security checkpoint."</p> <p>Meanwhile, TSA officers stopped two passengers from carrying their firearms onto flights at Boston Logan International Airport recently. On August 1, during security screening at the PreCheck lane of the Delta checkpoint, TSA officers detected a firearm in a man's backpack. TSA immediately alerted the Massachusetts State Police (MSP). MSP discovered the .380 caliber firearm was loaded with a chambered round. MSP confiscated the firearm and informed the New Hampshire resident he would receive a citation.</p> <p>Two days later at Boston Logan's A1 Delta security checkpoint, TSA officers detected a firearm in a man's backpack. MSP responded and discovered the firearm was a loaded .9mm with a chambered round. MSP confiscated the firearm and informed the Massachusetts resident he would receive a summons in the mail.</p> <p>"Once again our officers are on top of preventing firearms from entering the secure area of the airport," said Bob Allison, TSA's Federal Security Director for Massachusetts. "Carelessly traveling with a loaded firearm is a public safety concern, considering it could accidentally be discharged during a search. Gun owners need to ensure they know where their firearm is before traveling to the airport."</p> <p>TSA officers have now detected 16 firearms at Boston Logan's security checkpoints this year, 14 of which have been loaded. TSA detected 18 firearms at the airport's security checkpoints in 2021.</p> |

August seems to have started off on the wrong foot with numerous other catches across the country. For example, TSA officers prevented a handgun from making its way onboard an airplane at Des Moines International Airport on August 1. During the routine screening of carry-on luggage, a TSA officer spotted the image of a handgun on the X-ray screen. TSA officials immediately alerted the Des Moines Police Department. A law enforcement officer responded, confiscated the firearm, and issued a citation. The firearm was unloaded, and ammunition in its original box was discovered separately. The passenger, who has a permit to carry in the state of Iowa, stated he forgot that the gun was in his bag.

TSA officers at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA) prevented a Charlottesville, Va., man from carrying his loaded handgun onto a flight on August 3. It was the 18th gun detected by TSA officers at the airport so far this year. The .40 caliber gun was loaded with five bullets and was among the man's carry-on items. When TSA officers spotted the firearm, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) Police were notified, confiscated the weapon and cited the man. The man told officials that he was in a rush to fly to Florida to attend a funeral and forgot that he had his loaded gun with him.

The same day, a California resident was cited by the police after TSA officers at Richmond International Airport caught him with a loaded handgun in his carry-on bag. The handgun was loaded with nine bullets. It was the 11th gun caught so far this year at the airport. TSA officers stopped the man when his carry-on bag triggered an alarm in the security checkpoint X-ray unit. Upon spotting the weapon, TSA alerted airport police, who responded to the checkpoint, confiscated the handgun and cited the man on a weapons violation.

On August 4, TSA officers stopped a man from carrying a loaded firearm onto his flight at Bradley International Airport. During Thursday morning security screening, TSA officers detected a firearm in the man's carry-on bag. TSA immediately notified Connecticut State Police (CSP). During a search of the bag, CSP discovered a loaded .9mm firearm along with a total of 10 rounds. After questioning, CSP arrested the Connecticut resident for circumventing airport security, carrying a firearm without a permit, and possession of a large capacity magazine.

Also on August 4, TSA officers at Norfolk International Airport stopped two men from carrying loaded handguns onto their flights. First, A Norfolk, Va., man was caught with a 9mm handgun loaded with 10 bullets in his carry-on bag then an Elizabeth City, N.C., man was caught with a .38 caliber gun loaded with three bullets, including one in the chamber. It also was detected in his carry-on bag. The incidents were not related. In both cases, the carry-on bags triggered an alarm in the security checkpoint X-ray unit. Upon spotting the guns, TSA alerted the Norfolk Airport Authority Police, who responded to the checkpoint, confiscated the weapons and cited each individual on a weapons violation. The cases will be forwarded to the Norfolk Commonwealth's Attorney for possible criminal prosecution.

And the week ended with another firearm brought to the checkpoint, this time at Huntington Tri-State Airport. A Florida man was cited by police after TSA officers caught the handgun in the man's carry-on bag. The .22 caliber handgun was loaded with 10 bullets. When the TSA officer spotted the gun in the checkpoint X-ray machine, local police were alerted, came to the checkpoint, confiscated the weapon and cited the man on a weapons charge.

"Guns and airplanes don't mix," said Simone Beyer, TSA's Acting Federal Security Director for West Virginia. "Guns at security checkpoints are a serious concern. There's a right way to transport a gun for a flight and a wrong way. The wrong way is to bring it to a checkpoint. The right way is to make sure it's unloaded, packed in a hard-sided locked case and brought to the airline check-in counter to be declared. The airline will make sure it is transported in the belly of the plane where nobody has access to it during a flight."

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| HEADLINE | 08/05 CDC: most should be wearing indoor masks |
| SOURCE | https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2022-08-05/cdc-85-of-americans-should-be-wearing-a-mask-indoors-or-considering-the-mitigation-measure |

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| GIST | <p>Nearly 85% of Americans should be wearing a mask while indoors in public spaces or considering the measure, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>Over 55% of the U.S. lives in counties that are considered a “high” COVID-19 community level by the CDC. Under the agency’s guidance, those people should be wearing a mask while inside. More than 29% of the country lives in counties considered a “medium” level where they should consider the measure based on their risk of severe COVID-19.</p> <p>The percentage is a slight decrease over the previous week, when nearly 88% of the population was in a high or medium community level.</p> <p>Despite the small decline, coronavirus cases in the U.S. remain elevated at more than 115,000 on average each day. Coronavirus deaths have plateaued at over 300 per day.</p> <p>While the numbers are smaller than previous peaks – the omicron wave reached an average of 800,000 cases per day and 2,700 deaths – they remain significantly higher than previous lulls.</p> <p>The majority of new coronavirus infections come from the BA.5 omicron subvariant. It is believed to be the most transmissible strain yet, though it doesn’t show signs of causing more severe cases of COVID-19.</p> <p>But as BA.5 continues to dominate, experts are looking to see what the next variant will be. BA.2.75, an omicron subvariant that was first documented in India, could be it. The geographical spread of BA.2.75 – it’s been found in at least 15 countries – as well as its many mutations – nine more mutations on the spike protein than BA.2 – are causing public health officials to keep an eye on the subvariant.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Police role in mental health calls? |
| SOURCE | https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/mental-health/what-role-should-police-play-in-mental-health-crisis-calls-seattle/ |
| GIST | <p>9 a.m. <i>Joseph Binder and Collin Jevmore’s morning starts slowly, driving in a circle around Miller Playfield looking for a man who sometimes sleeps near the No. 12 bus stop. It’s a surprisingly nice day in April and the two just started their shift.</i></p> <p><i>He’s not here as far as they can see, but it was worth a shot.</i></p> <p><i>Earlier that month, the man — who appears to face mental health challenges — was detained by police after yelling at some schoolchildren nearby who were teasing him. Because verbal threats were made, school staff called law enforcement. That’s when Binder, a Seattle police officer, and Jevmore, a social worker on the crisis response unit, followed up.</i></p> <p><i>Today, they were hoping to check in with the man and build rapport with him.</i></p> <p>***</p> <p>For people with severe, untreated mental illnesses, care is often experienced as a series of stops and starts. A long night in an emergency room bed. Weeks in a secured facility. A stint in jail.</p> <p>Frequently, those encounters with the mental health crisis response system begin with police.</p> <p>In the midst of a continuing national debate over policing and a federal rollout of the new 988 crisis phone line, a key question remains: What role should law enforcement play in responding to mental health crises?</p> <p>In large West Coast cities like Seattle that face growing homelessness, and tangled in it, mental illnesses and drug use among some of their most vulnerable residents, the question is particularly crucial. Seattle received an estimated 11,000 to 14,000 emergency calls last year for mental and behavioral crises alone.</p> |

Evidence shows people with mental health problems experience worse — sometimes lethal — outcomes when police get involved. According to a national [2015 study](#) by the Treatment Advocacy Center, people with untreated mental illness are 16 times more likely to be killed during a police interaction than other residents.

Since 2016, Seattle police have killed at least five people in a mental health crisis or with a prior record of mental health challenges, according to Seattle Times records and an analysis of news coverage, though in many other cases it was unclear whether mental health could be a factor.

“Police response can be traumatic or triggering for people,” said Summer Starr, the deputy director of the Washington chapter of NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness. She said police were dispatched to her Bellingham home in 2016 while she was in a manic episode. “We don’t need that kind of armed response.”

In many cities, residents are interested in alternatives that keep marginalized communities safe and incorporate mental health professionals or peers in response to mental health crises.

While cities continue to pilot new approaches, some of these types of programs — including in Seattle — have been around for years. They’ve shown some success, but they’ve often remained small, needing the necessary alchemy of funding, sufficient staffing, political willpower and trust among departments.

The result? That by and large, most communities still send out officers for mental and behavioral crises.

10 a.m. *Binder and Jevmore strike out — they can’t find the man at Miller Playfield. This happens often in their line of work. Other times, they reconnect with people, but they’re not interested in services. The team leaves business cards behind.*

“We never know what might change,” Binder said. “It could be one really bad night and they’re like, ‘You know what? I want housing.’”

The team then heads to Capitol Hill to respond to a man who’s called 911 over a dozen times this morning saying he wants to die.

He’s a “frequent flyer,” someone who calls often enough that dispatch and officers recognize him. But it’s hard to connect with him — both to build a trusting relationship and quite literally.

The man rarely answers the door, despite his constant calls. Today is no different.

SPD has had some version of a crisis response unit since 1998 — their approach is similar to a program first piloted in the late ‘80s in Memphis, Tennessee, called crisis intervention training or CIT. In the 40-hour curriculum, officers learn about mental illnesses, how to communicate with people in crisis, and actually sit down and talk with someone with lived experience. Officers say it’s helpful to meet people with mental illnesses or substance use in a calm setting — it often changes their perspective.

All officers in Washington must now have an 8-hour training in crisis intervention since the passage of Initiative 940 in 2018, which regulates use of force, as well as mandates police to receive de-escalation and mental health training. About 54% of SPD officers are certified in the full 40-hour curriculum, according to the department.

In 2010, SPD also received a federal grant to pilot a program called the crisis response team. It created teams made up of one officer with a gun and one mental health professional who respond to mental and behavioral health-related calls — a model they still have today. The team has since grown to 10 people, and works alongside [Health One](#), a similar initiative from the Seattle Fire Department.

A 2015 [evaluation](#) of the program by Seattle University researchers in the International Journal of Law and Psychiatry found some success: About a third of cases were referred to mental health agencies or substance use treatment, and a smaller percentage were administratively cleared, meaning the case was closed without an arrest. While researchers were “hesitant to make policy recommendations,” it was a hopeful window into a new system that diverted people from jail or hospitals.

Binder, the officer on the crisis response team, said other SPD officers join them for short 30-day rotations to learn more and share back with their precincts. He’s also noticed more officers want to work on the team full-time.

But services remain limited: The team is small, and they don’t have enough dedicated staffing to cover overnight hours or weekends.

“The goal is to have two different parts ... the crisis response team would be the one that’s out in the field doing field stuff [and another team] would be doing follow-up cases in the office,” said Binder.

“Unfortunately, it’s us doing both of those things.”

11 a.m. *An older man is calling from a building near Broadway Avenue with allegations about his neighbors, saying they’re out to get him.*

Binder and Jevmore talk to the landlord downstairs. The tenant is bipolar and may be off his medication, Jevmore says. Neighbors complain that he’s yelling and stomping about. He’s also verbally aggressive, the landlord warns. She mentions they’re filing to evict him.

The team heads upstairs with two additional officers who joined as backup. The resident, who opens the doors for officers easily, is animated and talks loudly, jumping from topic to topic. But he’s unable to respond to questions clearly — likely in a manic episode, Jevmore says later.

“He was trying to center himself and he couldn’t for more than a couple of seconds,” explains Jevmore. Binder, the police officer, asks the man whether he takes any medication and if he intends to hurt himself. The man says he would never hurt himself, but starts on another tangent. Jevmore makes a note to check on him later in the week.

An estimated 6-7% of Washingtonians face serious mental illness like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Recovery is possible, often with the assistance of medication and therapy. But relapses can occur, especially during stressful periods. In a painful twist, a condition called [anosognosia](#) can also cause people to not recognize their own illness and make it hard for them to keep up with treatment.

Often, officers on SPD’s crisis response team have to decide whether to refer cases to designated crisis responders, or DCRs, who are mental health professionals specifically authorized by regional behavioral health care agencies to determine whether someone should be involuntarily committed to psychiatric care temporarily. The law in Washington says people can be committed if they are considered a threat to themselves or others, or if they are “gravely disabled” and cannot care for themselves.

The calls that crisis response teams like SPD’s respond to often are also interwoven with broad societal issues, like housing.

It’s a devastating, self-perpetuating loop, documented by academic [studies](#). In one common example, what starts as a noise complaint or lack of cleanliness due to someone’s behavioral health, leads to a person getting labeled as a nuisance. They get evicted and destabilize even more. Finding housing again becomes harder with an eviction record, which can result in homelessness.

12 p.m. *The radio buzzes and dispatch tells the crisis response team that Seattle Fire is requesting them. A man in an apartment stairwell is not moving, but the situation is under control. Binder and Jevmore weigh their options: They can't do much more than the team that's already there — and to reach them, it's 45 minutes with traffic.*

Another call comes in and the team is rerouted to Pacific Place instead. Tourists walk by, staring at two bike patrol officers and a tall man in gym shorts, a black coat, and scuffed white sneakers.

A coffee shop called about an incident involving this man, who apparently thought someone stole his phone card. Officers believed he has intellectual or developmental disabilities. Jevmore calls around and confirms the man is also diagnosed with schizophrenia and has a history of drug use.

Over the next half-hour, the team tries to calm him down and ask if they can call anyone for him. At times the man walks into traffic but officers ask him to step back onto the sidewalk. At one point, he gets frustrated and empties his duffel bag. A toothbrush, razor and orange medication bottle tumble out on the sidewalk with other belongings.

Officers pick up the items and keep trying to talk to him. Eventually, he agrees to ride with another officer to the Downtown Emergency Service Center's [crisis facility](#).

Other cities have taken their own approaches to crisis response. Often, the question is whether these teams are set up to respond to psychiatric emergencies in progress — particularly involving weapons or a safety risk — or work more proactively, focusing on lower-urgency calls in hope of preventing larger crises in the future.

For example, [CAHOOTS](#), an often-cited model out of Eugene, Oregon, that's been around for over 30 years, sends out a mobile crisis team staffed with a medic (like a nurse or EMT) paired with a mental health professional. In some cases they'll co-respond with a police officer, but in general the calls they respond to are more limited than SPD's unit. They do not respond to any 911 calls that include criminal activity, a weapon or any kind of physical threat or unsafe setting.

Models like this minimize an armed response by police. Still, Jessica Shook, a designated crisis responder in Thurston and Mason counties and president of the Washington Association of Designated Crisis Responders, said the result is people in acute crisis sometimes don't get immediate help because the situation is too unsafe for mental health workers.

She gave the example of a crisis responder entering a chaotic scene where there's someone experiencing a mental health crisis, several other people, weapons, drugs and a history of violence.

"You're going to tell me that my crisis workers ... they're gonna walk into that house and they're just going to talk everybody into health?" she asked.

Though she doesn't want police to be the first or only response, she also can't imagine a world where law enforcement isn't at least part of the solution.

"You know who's gonna go to that? Cops," Shook said. "Wouldn't it be better to have cops and mental health professionals go together?"

In Arlington, Snohomish County, a new pilot program called the [Center for Justice Social Work](#) launched this year, with \$375,000 from the state Legislature funding four social workers and four clinical interns over two years.

They are not immediately dispatched during crises, but instead follow up on referrals from local police and fire. The team also responds to substance use, social and financial issues, and older adults who are struggling to live independently, managing anywhere from 20 to 90 referrals a month.

Kaitlyn Goubeau, the founder and CEO of the Center, previously worked with the Everett Police Department responding to crisis calls. She saw a need for a program that is well-partnered with law enforcement, but not actually part of the same response.

“The balance of being part of the police department — and *not* being part of the police department — is this fine but a very gray line,” said Goubeau. “You’re ultimately never going to make everybody happy.”

1:30 p.m. *Jevmore and Binder get called to West Seattle by a team of designated crisis responders seeking support.*

In this situation, the King County DCRs were called to determine whether a young man could be committed for psychiatric care. When Jevmore and Binder arrive, two DCRs are outside talking to the landlord, and another officer joins them as back up.

Within minutes, they decide to come back another time. The young man is known to have a gang affiliation and firearms, and the situation is deemed too unsafe to enter. The DCRs will call the crisis response team tomorrow and try again.

Starr, with NAMI Washington, knows that for people who are very sick and physically aggressive, police may have to respond. She advocates for a better crisis system, one that’s comprehensive and centers people with mental illness

“Mental health is not something that exists by itself,” she said. “If someone experiences housing instability ... oppression of their sexual or gender identity, all of those things surround an individual. It’s really huge that we start looking at mental health from these larger social contexts.”

She also advocates for alternatives like [peer respite services](#), “Residential places that people can go sometimes for up to two weeks to recover and they’re not locked down,” Starr explained. [Research](#) on peer respite programs has shown to be successful in reducing the need for more costly emergency and inpatient services.

“They are places that normalize altered experiences or people who are in crisis. And I think that that’s a major thing — our regular community just doesn’t know how to respond to someone (with mental illness).”

Sgt. Corey Williams, overseeing SPD’s crisis response unit, agrees, and advocates for diversions like drug or mental health court when officers are responding to property or lower level crimes. (Otherwise, officers, for the most part, have the discretion to arrest a person in a mental health crisis if a crime has been committed.)

“It’s a tough balance, because we’re not gonna arrest our way out of this situation,” Williams said. But the overlap between social services and law enforcement is already there as far as he sees.

There’s certainly room for law enforcement to learn more skills in mental health and social services, he said. He also wants more social workers alongside officers, ideally one for every precinct, at every shift.

“What I hear from a lot of the officers is they didn’t come to this job to do crisis intervention, they came to ... serve their community or help people,” he said. “But then they quickly find that crisis work takes up so much of their calls.”

3 p.m. *The team starts wrapping up and heads back to the East Precinct. Now it’s paperwork, extreme risk protection orders limiting firearms for people at risk of harming themselves or others, and following up on past cases.*

As the officers head up First Hill, a construction worker flags down the patrol car.

“See that sleeping bag up there?” she says, pointing down a street corner. “Someone’s passed out and they’re unresponsive.”

The car turns around and Jevmore gets ready with Narcan, a medication that can be used to treat an overdose, just in case.

“Sir, hello?” Binder calls out. A minute passes. Eventually, a quiet voice comes from the blue sleeping bag.

The man is from Sequim, 60 miles away. He doesn’t accept medical or housing services, but takes a cigarette and asks for a bus ticket home.

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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Mini-heat wave hits Seattle, season’s last? |
| SOURCE | https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/mini-heat-wave-hits-seattle-likely-last-of-the-season/ |
| GIST | <p>Those who like very hot weather: Get outside for the last day of what is likely the last heat wave of the season. For others, including older people and others sensitive to the heat, take care.</p> <p>It is not expected to last. Sunday’s high temperature in Seattle reached 90 degrees, according to the National Weather Service. It kicked off a two-day mini-heat wave, with temperatures Monday also expected to be in the upper 80s and mid-90s, according to Gary Schneider of the National Weather Service in Seattle, which announced a heat advisory through Monday. The risk is moderate for those sensitive to the heat.</p> <p>The hottest temperatures will extend south from Seattle through Tacoma and Olympia, reaching Chehalis, and east to the foothills of the Cascades.</p> <p>The heat wave will not be as hot or as long as the recent six-day streak of hot temperatures, which climbed to the upper 90s. And, Schneider said, there are no more heat waves on the horizon.</p> <p>Once we get to the middle of August, the chance of temperatures getting into the 90s starts going down, according to Schneider. “We’re kind of in the peak of the hot season right now,” he said.</p> <p>“On Tuesday, we’re back into the low to mid-80s, which is slightly above normal, but cooler,” Schneider continued. “And then on Wednesday, we’ll actually be below normal.”</p> <p>That’ll mean the temperature in the 70s, with potential rain showers and thunderstorms possible. Temperatures are expected to rebound late in the week, according to the National Weather Service, with dry days forecast for Thursday and Friday bringing highs in the low 80s.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Israel, Gaza militants agree ceasefire |
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| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/07/world/israel-gaza-fighting-airstrikes#israel-and-militants-in-gaza-reach-a-cease-fire |
| GIST | <p>Israel and Palestinian Islamic Jihad militants in Gaza agreed to a cease-fire, the two parties announced late Sunday night, a move that was expected to end a three-day conflict that killed dozens of Palestinians, including children as well as key militant commanders; destroyed several residential buildings and militant bases in Gaza; and paralyzed parts of southern Israel.</p> <p>The conflict, which began on Friday afternoon, when Israel launched airstrikes to foil what it said was an imminent attack from Gaza, has left the status quo in Israel and the occupied territories almost unchanged. A 15-year blockade of Gaza remains in place, and there is no prospect of peace talks to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.</p> <p>The cease-fire officially took effect at 11:30 p.m. local time, 4:40 p.m. Eastern, but did not appear to have immediately been observed by either side, as rocket fire and airstrikes continued until in the minutes after the deadline.</p> <p>Israeli officials declined to reveal further details about the agreement, but Islamic Jihad said it had received assurances from Egyptian officials who mediated the negotiations that Egypt would lobby Israel to release two leading members of the group currently detained in Israeli jails, Bassem Saadi and Khalil Awawdeh.</p> <p>If the truce holds, the fighting will end with a death toll of at least 44 in Gaza, including 15 children, according to the health ministry there. Some 311 people were injured, the health ministry there said. Scores of Israelis were lightly injured while running for cover from Palestinian rockets, and an unexploded rocket fell in a residential area of the southern Israeli city of Ashkelon, officials and medics said.</p> <p>The fighting has badly damaged Islamic Jihad, Gaza's second-largest militia. Two of its key leaders are now dead and many of its bases and weapons factories have been destroyed.</p> <p>The eruption of violence also has driven a wedge between Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas, the largest militia in Gaza, which opted to remain on the sidelines of the conflict.</p> <p>And it has highlighted both the limits and strengths of Israel's strategy of offering small economic concessions to ordinary Gazans — notably 14,000 work permits that help boost the Palestinian economy.</p> <p>That approach failed to prevent the recent days of fighting, which was yet another conflagration involving Gaza, which has experienced at least six major bursts of violence since Hamas seized control there in 2007. But by helping to convince Hamas to stay out of this round of rockets and strikes, the strategy likely helped shorten the length of the fighting, which in the past has often run for weeks, rather than days.</p> <p>Within Israel, the conflict also initially appeared to help burnish the credentials of Yair Lapid, Israel's interim prime minister, who was long been accused by critics in Israel of lacking the experience necessary to lead the country in times of war.</p> <p>Before the cease-fire was announced, Israeli analysts largely portrayed the episode as a victory and even a warning to Israel's other enemies in the region — particularly Hezbollah, the Islamist militia in Lebanon — of the fate that awaits them should they also enter into full-scale combat with Israel in the near future.</p> <p>By contrast, with no change to life or prospects in Gaza and the West Bank, Palestinians had little to celebrate and many families were left grieving over the loss of life.</p> <p>Ghassan Abu Ramadan, 65, a retired civil engineer who has injured during an Israeli strike on Friday, was recovering in the hospital on Sunday as the cease-fire was being negotiated.</p> <p>"We have a complicated life here in Gaza," Mr. Abu Ramadan said, lying on a bed in the intensive care unit of Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. "We don't know what will happen, what our future will be."</p> |

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| | “How long will this continue?” Mr. Abu Ramadan added. |
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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Israel: slain IJ militant behind attacks |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/07/world/middleeast/khaled-mansour-islamic-jihad.html |
| GIST | <p>Khaled Mansour, the Islamic Jihad militant commander who was killed in an Israeli missile strike in southern Gaza on Saturday night, was responsible for rocket and mortar attacks against Israel stretching back years, according to the Israeli military.</p> <p>Mr. Mansour led the militant group’s operations in the southern region of Gaza, holding a rank equivalent to that of a general, the Israeli military said. It added that he had claimed responsibility for an attack that killed two Israeli soldiers in 2010 and was involved in another attack that injured the Israeli commander of the Southern Gaza Brigade in 2004.</p> <p>One of the soldiers killed in 2010, Maj. Eliraz Peretz, is almost a household name in Israel. His mother, Miriam Peretz, who lost two sons in uniform in two separate enemy actions, has become a national symbol of sacrifice.</p> <p>Mr. Mansour’s body was pulled from the rubble of a collapsed building in a refugee camp in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, along with the bodies of his deputy and another militant and five civilians, including a child, according to Islamic Jihad.</p> <p>The militant group mourned their deaths in a statement and vowed to retaliate with more rocket attacks. Surviving leaders of Islamic Jihad attended funerals on Sunday for those killed.</p> <p>Israeli military officials said they regretted civilian deaths in Gaza and pledged that they would be investigated. But they have blamed the militants for operating out of residential neighborhoods and using Gaza residents as “human shields.”</p> <p>The military also asserted that Mr. Mansour had been plotting an attack against Israel using anti-tank missiles and rockets.</p> <p>The assassination of Mr. Mansour followed the killing of Islamic Jihad’s commander for the northern region of Gaza, Taysir al-Jabari, in Israeli strikes on Friday that opened the latest flare-up in fighting. Israel said the strikes had thwarted the group’s plans for an anti-tank missile attack along the border to avenge the arrest of a senior Islamic Jihad commander in the West Bank.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/08 UN chief: attack on nuclear plant ‘suicidal’ |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/08/ukraine-nuclear-plant-attack-suicidal-un-chief-zaporizhzhia-russia |
| GIST | <p>UN secretary general António Guterres has called for international inspectors to be given access to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant after Ukraine and Russia traded accusations over the shelling of Europe’s largest atomic plant at the weekend.</p> <p>“Any attack to a nuclear plant is a suicidal thing,” Guterres told a news conference in Japan on Monday, two days after attending the Hiroshima peace memorial ceremony to commemorate the 77th anniversary of the world’s first atomic bombing.</p> <p>Guterres said the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) needed access to the plant. “We fully support the IAEA in all their efforts in relation to create the conditions of stabilisation of the plant,” Guterres said.</p> |

Ukraine said renewed Russian shelling on Saturday had damaged three radiation sensors and hurt a worker at the Zaporizhzhia power plant, the second hit in consecutive days on the site.

Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskiy accused Russia of waging “nuclear terror” that warranted more international sanctions, this time on Moscow’s nuclear sector. “There is no such nation in the world that could feel safe when a terrorist state fires at a nuclear plant,” Zelenskiy said in a televised address on Sunday.

Russian forces captured the plant in south-eastern Ukraine in early March but it is still run by Ukrainian technicians.

Russian-installed authorities in the area said Ukrainian forces hit the site with a multiple rocket launcher, damaging administrative buildings and an area near a storage facility. The Russian embassy in Washington also released a statement itemising the damage.

“Ukrainian nationalists launched an artillery strike on the territory of the specified object on Aug. 5. Two high-voltage power lines and a water pipeline were damaged as a result of the shelling. Only thanks to the effective and timely actions of the Russian military in covering the nuclear power facility, its critical infrastructure was not affected,” the embassy said.

The head of Zaporizhzhia’s occupying authorities, Evgeniy Balitskyi, said that Ukrainian forces were to blame and had “decided to put the whole of Europe on the brink of a nuclear catastrophe” by shelling the plant.

Ukraine says Russia has turned the plant into a military base, making it extremely hard to target the Russian troops and equipment inside. According to the New York Times, Russia has been using the plant as cover from which to fire on Ukrainian forces since mid-July.

The Washington-based thinktank the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) assessed on 3 August that Russian forces were likely to be using the power plant to “play on western fears of a nuclear disaster in Ukraine in an effort to degrade western will to provide military support to a Ukrainian counteroffensive”. The ISW further said that Russia was “effectively using the plant as a nuclear shield to prevent Ukrainian strikes on Russian forces and equipment”.

It has not been possible to independently determine which side was responsible for the attack on the power station.

IAEA chief Rafael Mariano Grossi warned on Saturday that the latest attack “underlines the very real risk of a nuclear disaster”.

Elsewhere, Russia is strengthening its positions and numbers on Ukraine’s southern front to ready itself for a Ukrainian counteroffensive and is likely to be preparing the ground to attack, according to British and Ukrainian military authorities.

“Russian troops are almost certainly amassing in the south, either waiting for a Ukrainian counteroffensive or preparing to attack. Long convoys of Russian military trucks, tanks, artillery and other things continue to move from the Donbas to the south-west,” said the UK’s defence ministry, confirming early assertions by Ukraine’s deputy military intelligence chief.

According to a separate source with Ukraine’s military intelligence, Russian forces are creating fire damage along the frontlines in the occupied Kherson region to stop Ukrainian forces from pushing out of their positions, and adding more units to attack Mykolaiv and south Dnipropetrovsk region, as well as conducting aerial reconnaissance of the area with drones. In occupied Zaporizhzhia region, the Russians are actively attacking Ukrainian troops while bringing in new units to strengthen their numbers, according to the same source.

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| HEADLINE | 08/08 Day 166 of the Russia invasion |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/08/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-166-of-the-invasion |
| GIST | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russia is strengthening its positions and numbers on Ukraine's southern front to ready itself for a Ukrainian counteroffensive and is likely to be preparing the ground to attack, according to British and Ukrainian military authorities. "Russian troops are almost certainly amassing in the south, either waiting for a Ukrainian counteroffensive or preparing to attack. Long convoys of Russian military trucks, tanks, artillery and other things continue to move from the Donbas to the south-west," the UK's defence ministry said. • Ukraine and Russia have blamed each other for renewed shelling of Europe's largest nuclear power plant, the Zaporizhzhia. Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskiy called for new international sanctions on Moscow for "nuclear terror". The UN nuclear watchdog has called for an immediate end to all military action near the plant after it was hit by shelling on Saturday night, causing one of the reactors to shut down and creating a "very real risk of a nuclear disaster". • Russian shelling was recorded on Saturday in dozens of towns along the eastern and southern frontlines, according to the Ukrainian military. It also said Russian forces attempted to conduct assault in six different areas in the eastern Donetsk region, all of which failed to gain any territory and were held back by Ukrainian forces. • Ukraine is investigating almost 26,000 suspected war crime cases committed since Russia's invasion in February and has charged 135 people, its chief war crimes prosecutor told Reuters. Of those charged, approximately 15 are in Ukrainian custody and the remaining 120 remain at large. • Zelenskiy said on Sunday that there could be no talks with Russia if it proceeds with referendums in occupied areas of Ukraine on joining Russia. Russian forces now hold large areas of territory in eastern Ukraine's Donbas region and in southern areas, where officials have raised the possibility of holding referendums. • Four ships carrying Ukrainian foodstuffs sailed from Ukrainian Black Sea ports on Sunday. Pope Francis welcomed the departure of the ships carrying grain from Ukrainian Black Sea ports saying this could be a model for dialogue to bring an end to the war in Ukraine. • Human rights group Amnesty International apologised for the "distress and anger" caused by a report that accused Ukraine of endangering civilians. The apology comes after Amnesty's Ukraine head Oksana Pokalchuk said that she was resigning as she opposed the report's publication, saying the human rights group unwittingly "created material that sounded like support for Russian narratives of the invasion". • UK defence secretary Ben Wallace welcomed a decision by Sweden to join countries contributing to the UK-led program to train Ukrainian personnel in the UK. • The US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, landed in South Africa on Sunday on a three-country visit with a reported aim of countering Russian influence on the continent. |
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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Russia Wagner group out of the shadows |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/07/russias-private-military-contractor-wagner-comes-out-of-the-shadows-in-ukraine-war |
| GIST | <p>Three billboards in the Ural city of Ekaterinburg shine a light on what was once one of Russia's most shadowy organisations, the private military contractor Wagner.</p> <p>"Motherland, Honour, Blood, Bravery. WAGNER", one of the posters reads.</p> <p>Another, which locals said first appeared on the outskirts of the country's fourth largest city in early July, depicts three men in military uniform next to the words "Wagner2022.org".</p> <p>The billboards, which can be seen in several Russian cities, are part of Wagner's efforts to recruit fighters to join its ranks in Ukraine.</p> |

They also serve as a testament to the transformation the group has undergone since Moscow launched its invasion over five months ago, from a secretive mercenary organisation shrouded in mystery to an increasingly public extension of Russia's military efforts in Ukraine.

"It looks like they have decided that they will no longer try to hide their existence. By now, everyone knows who they are," said Denis Korotkov, a former Novaya Gazeta journalist and longtime observer of Wagner.

Wagner was established in 2014 to support pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine. The US and others say it is funded by Yevgeny Prigozhin, a powerful businessman closely linked to Vladimir Putin who is under western sanctions. Prigozhin denies any links to the group.

The group has since played a prominent role [fighting alongside the Russian army in support](#) of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria, and has been spotted in several African nations – places in which Russia holds strategic and economic interests. It has been repeatedly [accused of war crimes and human rights abuses](#).

Despite its global reach, much of the group's inner workings have remained a secret to the outside world.

On paper, it doesn't exist, with no company registration, tax returns or organisational chart to be found. Russia's senior leadership, including Vladimir Putin, has repeatedly denied any connections between Wagner and the state.

Private military companies are officially banned in [Russia](#), and the semi-legal framework mercenaries operate under has also meant that family members of deceased Wagner operatives were often pressured into silence when seeking information about their loved ones.

And while Wagner has gradually embarked on a PR campaign, with companies linked to Prigozhin funding propaganda films that [glorify](#) the deeds of "military instructors" in Africa, any mention of the group remained largely taboo in the public sphere. Journalists like Korotkov who investigated the group have been harassed for their work.

Russia's war in Ukraine has, however, brought the group out of the dark.

At the end of March, British intelligence claimed that about 1,000 Wagner mercenaries had gone to Ukraine. The group's role in the war appears to have since grown significantly after Moscow refocused its efforts on the east following its failure to capture the capital, Kyiv.

Wagner is believed to have played a central part in the capture of Popasna in May and Lysychansk in June, two strategically important towns that Russia largely razed to the ground during their seizure of the eastern Luhansk region. On Wednesday, British intelligence said that Wagner played a role in the capture of the giant Vuhlehirsk power plant in Ukraine's east.

As Wagner's role in Ukraine grew, so did its public image at home.

In May, Wagner received what appeared to be its first acknowledgment on state news when a correspondent alluded to it in a national broadcast, saying the army had its "own orchestra" in Ukraine.

Wagner is often referred to by its supporters and members as the "orchestra", a reference to the German composer Richard Wagner. The group's alleged founder, Dmitry Utkin, has been linked to the far right and is believed to have named it after Hitler's favourite composer.

UK intelligence has also suggested that Prigozhin, who was pictured in eastern Ukraine in April, has recently been made a Hero of the Russian Federation in recognition of the group's role in the invasion.

Last week, Wagner received its biggest recognition to date when Komsomolskaya Pravda, the country's most widely read tabloid, published a story on the group's storming of the Vuhlehirsk plant on its front page.

Wagner publicly boasted of its involvement in the war with a message on its website stating: "They have already liberated Popasna, join us to liberate the entire Donbas! Go on your first combat campaign with living industry legends!"

When the Guardian contacted the email address posted on Wagner's website, an individual claiming to represent the group said that it started its recruitment campaign because "we saw that the support for our company is colossal, and there are many who want to join".

"But nothing changes, there is no Wagner and never was, it's just a legend. There are only Robin Hoods who protect the poor who are oppressed by the rich," the person added in an email exchange that was characteristic of Wagner's tongue-in-cheek public stance.

The website has since been taken down by Hostinger, the Lithuania-based internet domain provider that hosted it. A Hostinger representative said it took action when it discovered that the site was "cloaking" itself with fake identities, VPNs and crypto payments.

Wagner also appears to have established regional recruitment centres in over 20 cities, posting the phone numbers of recruiters on popular social media channels linked to the group.

The ads say that Wagner offers soldiers over 240,000 roubles (£3,370) a month, several times more than regular soldiers' typical wages.

The Guardian contacted several of the recruiters whose numbers were listed. Some used the mercenary group's symbols as their profile pictures on WhatsApp and Telegram, and none denied their association with Wagner.

When asked about Wagner's mobilisation efforts, a recruiter from the Nizhny Novgorod region in central Russia, who declined to give his name, sent a list of the documents needed to join up, which included a passport from any country that "wasn't Nato or Ukraine" and several medical certificates.

The recruiter also sent a list of items to bring once accepted by Wagner, ranging from shower gel to tourniquets and other medical equipment.

"See you in Molkino", the message concluded, referring to the town in Russia's Krasnodar district where Wagner is believed to be headquartered near a major defence ministry base.

Military analysts have argued that Russia's reliance on groups like Wagner shows the extent to which the country's regular army, which has lost as much as a third of its combat strength, has struggled to achieve its goals in Ukraine.

"Wagner private military contractors have reportedly played a critical role in the fighting. Indeed, it is fair to ask whether some Wagner detachments ... are in fact more elite and capable than regular Russian motorised rifle units," wrote Michael Kofman and Rob Lee, two leading specialists on the Russian military, in a recent briefing for the website War on the Rocks.

The war in Ukraine and Russia's military failures appear to have also accelerated Wagner's cooperation with the defence ministry. Marat Gabidullin, a former Wagner commander, told the Guardian in an earlier interview that his troops worked closely with Russia's defence ministry when fighting in Syria.

That relationship appears to have deepened since the start of the war in Ukraine. According to an investigation by the independent Meduza outlet, the Russian ministry of defence has largely taken control of the networks that Wagner used to recruit new soldiers.

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| | <p>Korotkov, the Wagner expert, said it was hard to distinguish between soldiers fighting for Wagner and those in the regular army.</p> <p>“The defence ministry has largely co-opted Wagner, and it now looks more like one coordinated group,” Korotkov said, adding that such cooperation made it hard to estimate the number of Wagner soldiers in Ukraine.</p> <p>And while Wagner’s role in the invasion has made the group mainstream, some say its latest recruitment push threatens to diminish its overall military standards.</p> <p>According to the investigative news outlet iStories, Wagner has resorted to recruiting prisoners and offering high salaries and potential amnesties for six months of service.</p> <p>“Wagner is lowering its recruitment standards and hiring convicts and formerly blacklisted individuals, potentially impacting Russian military effectiveness,” the UK’s Ministry of Defence said in an intelligence briefing last week.</p> <p>“Even before the conflict, less than 30% of the soldiers in Wagner were actual professionals,” said Gabidullin, the former Wagner commander. “Now, the group will mostly consist of a bunch of amateurs ... The circus that is Russia continues.”</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Ex-rebel Colombia’s first leftist president |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/08/colombia-gustavo-petro-first-leftist-president-war-on-drugs-has-failed |
| GIST | <p>Colombia’s first leftist president has been sworn into office, promising to fight inequality and bring peace to a country long haunted by bloody feuds between the government, drug traffickers and rebel groups.</p> <p>Gustavo Petro, a former member of Colombia’s M-19 guerrilla group, won the presidential election in June by beating conservative parties that offered moderate changes to the market-friendly economy, but failed to connect with voters frustrated by rising poverty and violence against human rights leaders and environmental groups in rural areas.</p> <p>On Sunday, he said Colombia was getting a “second chance” to tackle violence and poverty and promised that his government would implement economic policies that seek to end longstanding inequalities and ensure “solidarity” with the nation’s most vulnerable.</p> <p>The incoming president said he was willing to start peace talks with armed groups across the country and also called on the United States and other developed nations to change drug policies that have focused on the prohibition of substances like cocaine, and fed violent conflicts across Colombia and other Latin American nations.</p> <p>“It’s time for a new international convention that accepts that the war on drugs has failed,” he said. “Of course peace is possible. But it depends on current drug policies being substituted with strong measures that prevent consumption in developed societies.”</p> <p>Petro is part of a growing group of leftist politicians and political outsiders who have been winning elections in Latin America since the pandemic broke out and hurt incumbents who struggled with its economic aftershocks.</p> <p>The ex-rebel’s victory was also exceptional for Colombia, where voters had been historically reluctant to back leftist politicians who were often accused of being soft on crime or allied with guerrillas.</p> |

A 2016 peace deal between Colombia's government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia turned the focus of voters away from the violent conflicts playing out in rural areas and gave prominence to problems like poverty and corruption, fuelling the popularity of leftist parties in national elections. However, smaller rebel groups like the National Liberation Army and the Gulf Clan continue to fight over drug trafficking routes, illegal goldmines and other resources abandoned by the FARC.

Petro, 62, has described US-led anti-narcotics policies as a failure but has also said he would like to work with Washington "as equals," building schemes to combat climate change or bring infrastructure to rural areas where many farmers say coca leaves are the only viable crop.

Petro also formed alliances with environmentalists during his presidential campaign and has promised to turn Colombia into a "global powerhouse for life" by slowing deforestation and reducing the country's reliance on fossil fuels.

He has said Colombia will stop granting new licenses for oil exploration and will ban fracking projects, even though the oil industry makes up almost 50% of the nation's legal exports. He plans to finance social spending with a \$10bn a year tax reform that would boost taxes on the rich and do away with corporate tax breaks.

"He's got a very ambitious agenda," said Yan Basset, a political scientist at Bogotá's Rosario University. "But he will have to prioritize. The risk Petro faces is that he goes after too many reforms at once and gets nothing" through Colombia's congress.

Analysts expect Petro's foreign policy to be markedly different from that of his predecessor Iván Duque, a conservative who backed Washington's drug policies and worked with the US government to isolate the regime of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro in an attempt to force the authoritarian leader into holding free elections.

Petro has instead said he will recognise Maduro's government and try to work with the Venezuelan president on several issues, including fighting rebel groups along the porous border between the countries. Some border residents are hoping that improved relations will generate more commerce and job opportunities.

In Cúcuta, a city just a few miles from the Venezuelan border, trade school student Daniela Cárdenas is hoping Petro will carry out an educational reform that includes free tuition for college students.

"He has promised so many things," Cardenas, 19, said after traveling 90 minutes from her rural community to the city. "We must work to be able to pay our student fees, which are quite expensive and, well, that makes many things difficult for us."

Petro won the election by just 2 percentage points, and is still a polarizing figure in Colombia, where many have been wary of having former guerrillas participate in politics.

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| HEADLINE | 08/08 Drills show China ability strangle Taiwan |
| SOURCE | https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/08/asia/china-taiwan-military-exercises-what-we-learned-intl-hnk-ml/index.html |
| GIST | <p>Seoul, South Korea (CNN)China's military exercises show Beijing doesn't need to invade Taiwan to control it -- rather it can strangle the self-ruled island, cutting it off from the outside world, Chinese and American analysts say.</p> <p>The People's Liberation Army (PLA) drills, which officially began last Thursday, focused on six zones that essentially encircled Taiwan, restricting access to civilian ships and aircraft in the area, as forces conducted live-fire drills and missile launches.</p> |

Meng Xiangqing, a professor at the PLA National Defense University, said the six areas were chosen to show how China could cut off Taiwan's ports, attack its most important military installations, and sever access for foreign forces that may come to Taiwan's aid.

"Connect the six areas in a line, like a noose, with the knot of the noose right in the southwest direction," Meng said in an interview with state-run broadcaster CCTV.

China's Communist Party views democratic Taiwan as its territory -- despite never having controlled it. Uniting Taiwan with the mainland is a cornerstone of Chinese policy and President Xi Jinping has not ruled out the use of force to bring the island under Beijing's control.

Meng noted the northern exercise areas had successfully sealed off Taiwan from Okinawa, the island where both Japan and the United States base substantial military assets. In the southern areas, the PLA showed it could control the Bashi Channel, "the only way to enter and exit the South China Sea," he said.

And in the eastern areas, China's forces showed that accurate Chinese missile fire could force foreign warships to back away from Taiwan's waters, he added.

"This is an unprecedented encirclement of Taiwan Island," Meng said.

And on Monday, China issued a notice to say drills were continuing.

A trigger for long-planned exercises

The exercises kicked off after US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi angered Beijing by visiting Taipei last week to show her support for democracy on the island.

Beijing flooded the seas and skies around Taiwan with ships and jets -- as many as 80 Chinese warplanes and vessels were detected in the Taiwan Strait Sunday, according to Taiwan's Defense Ministry.

On previous days, the PLA also fired rockets toward small, Taiwan-controlled islands near the mainland, and launched ballistic missiles farther afield, with some flying over Taiwan and falling in the ocean east of the island. Five splashed down in Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone -- a message to one of Taiwan's key supporters as well as the government in Taipei.

A map of the six Chinese exercise areas "clearly plots out where the Chinese think the key operating areas are for their strategic intimidation of Taiwan," Mick Ryan, an adjunct fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and former Australian Army general, wrote on Twitter.

Commercial ships and aircraft were warned to stay clear of the exercise zones, forcing shippers and airlines to arrange alternative routes.

Carl Schuster, a former director of operations at the US Pacific Command's Joint Intelligence Center in Hawaii said the blockade of six zones showed that any takeover of Taiwan could begin with an isolation strategy.

"The exercise demonstrated that blockade in a conflict need not require a constant naval presence offshore, but rather, shipping and air traffic can be deterred by air and missile threats in support of a maritime blockade," Schuster said.

"The exercise ... suggests Beijing would first isolate Taiwan and resort to air and missile strikes in hopes of breaking Taipei's political will. A costly invasion probably is a last resort," Schuster said.

What could come next

Schuster said much of what Beijing demonstrated had long been in the works. The drills coincided with standard military exercises on the PLA's training calendar, but he said Pelosi's visit allowed China to make a bigger statement.

"The size, geographic expanse and complexity of the exercise reflected months of planning," he said.
"This exercise marks the latest escalation in China's expanding military exercise and Taiwan-intimidation campaign."

He said he expects the PLA will continue to put pressure on Taiwan, and could also send a message to Japan with more drills to the north of the island.

New exercises are also likely in the South China Sea, the 1.3 million square miles of water, almost all of which China claims as its sovereign territory, where Beijing has built up military fortifications on contested islands, Schuster said.

While continuing exercises will allow the PLA to refine its tactics and operations, they also can provide an opportunity for adversaries to learn about the modern Chinese military, experts say.

"Nothing provides better insights into the actual capability of a military than seeing them deployed," Ryan, the former Australian Army general, wrote on Twitter.

With last week's drills, Xi had to demonstrate he would not waver [on his commitment to bringing Taiwan under Beijing's control](#), Schuster said. Pelosi's visit to the island posed a direct threat to that by presenting an alternative vision of democracy.

"(Pelosi) leads the democratically elected branch that originates America's government funding and economic policies. Her position and role makes her commitment to Taiwan's security particularly significant," Schuster said.

"Unable to bully her, Xi had to demonstrate China's power -- diplomatic, economic and military," he said. While the military exercises gave Xi strong visuals to support his resolve, China also hit Pelosi and the US government with [a range of sanctions](#).

The measures include the cancellation of future phone calls and meetings between Chinese and US military leaders and the suspension of cooperation on matters including the repatriation of illegal immigrants, legal assistance on criminal matters and the combat of transnational crimes. Talks on climate change were also suspended.

Beijing also announced measures targeting Pelosi and members of her immediate family.

"The goal is intimidation via the application of all elements of Chinese power," Schuster said.

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| HEADLINE | 08/06 California McKinney Fire destroys 87 homes |
| SOURCE | https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/06/us/california-mckinney-fire-saturday/index.html |
| GIST | <p>(CNN)California's McKinney Fire has destroyed nearly 90 houses and is only 40% contained a week after breaking out in the Klamath National Forest, with hot and dry conditions expected to continue through the weekend.</p> <p>The blaze, the largest wildfire in California so far this year, erupted on July 29 in the forest near the California-Oregon border and grew rapidly, fueled by winds from thunderstorms.</p> <p>As of Sunday morning, the fire had burned over 60,200 acres and the perimeter was 40% contained, according to InciWeb, a US clearinghouse for fire information. More than 3,500 fire personnel are involved in battling the fire.</p> |

Of 274 structures inspected so far, 87 homes and an additional 47 structures -- including garages and commercial buildings -- have been destroyed, according to an initial damage assessment [released by the Siskiyou County Office of Emergency Services](#).

The office said a further four structures had minor damage from the fire, with the damage assessment more than 50% complete.

The Klamath River community remains under an evacuation order, it said.

CNN Meteorologist Derek Van Dam said weather conditions were unlikely to help quell the fire over the weekend.

"Conditions have remained sunny and hot around the McKinney fire within the past 24 hours leading to the dry conditions near the incident. High temperatures have neared the triple digits in the valley floors, with excessive heat continuing through Monday before slightly cooler temperatures move in," he said.

"The combination of the heat, low humidity values, dry conditions and downslope winds mean that further spread of the fire can be anticipated through the weekend and into early next week. Although a thunderstorm cannot be ruled out over the fire region today, it won't likely contain any meaningful rainfall."

[The Siskiyou County Sheriff's Office](#) said it was working to try to allow residents back to their properties but that numerous hazards remained in the evacuation zone. Four bodies have been recovered from the burn area, it said earlier in the week.

Search and Rescue teams from California and southern Oregon had contributed more than 1,000 volunteer hours to the operation, [the sheriff's office said in a post on Facebook](#).

"At least 150 SAR members have been staffing our Law Enforcement Command Post, planning and organizing daily operations, going downriver to assist with searching structures and homes, and everything else that goes into a large incident. We have also had 10 search and rescue K9 teams, starting early in the morning each day," it said.

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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Wave of airline cancelations, delays |
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| SOURCE | https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/07/business/us-flight-cancellations-delays-sunday/index.html |
| GIST | <p>(CNN)Another wave of airline cancellations and delays is being felt across the United States on Sunday.</p> <p>According to the flight tracking website, FlightAware, there have been 912 flights canceled so far on Sunday.</p> <p>A total of 6,378 flights have been delayed across the United States.</p> <p>Chicago O'Hare saw the most cancellations and delays on Sunday, with approximately 12% of flights canceled, and over 40% of flights delayed.</p> <p>Chicago saw heavy rain on Sunday, including a flash flood warning that was in place for parts of the afternoon for portions of Cook County.</p> <p>Weekend of cancellations</p> <p>Saturday saw a total of 657 flight cancellations and 7,267 delays within, into or out of the United States.</p> <p>American Airlines canceled 4% of its flights and 24% of its Saturday flights were delayed, according to FlightAware.</p> |

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| | <p>United had 4% of its flights canceled and 23% delayed, followed by Delta with 2% canceled and 22% of its Saturday flights delayed, FlightAware notes.</p> <p>41% of JetBlue's flights and 36% of Southwest's flights were also delayed on Saturday, according to the website.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/08 China: new military exercises Taiwan |
| SOURCE | https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/china-announces-fresh-military-exercises-taiwan-rcna41955 |
| GIST | <p>TAIPEI, Taiwan — China's military announced fresh military drills on Monday in the seas and airspace around Taiwan, a day after the scheduled end of its largest-ever exercises to protest last week's visit to Taipei by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.</p> <p>China's Eastern Theater Command said it would conduct joint drills focusing on anti-submarine and sea assault operations, confirming the fears of some security analysts and diplomats that Beijing would continue to maintain pressure on Taiwan's defenses.</p> <p>Pelosi's visit to Taiwan last week infuriated China, which regards the self-ruled island as its own and responded with test launches of ballistic missiles over Taipei for the first time, as well as ditching some lines of dialogue with Washington.</p> <p>The duration and precise location of the latest drills is not yet known, but Taiwan has already eased flight restrictions near the six earlier Chinese exercise areas surrounding the island.</p> <p>Shortly before the latest drills were announced, Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen met visiting St. Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves, telling him she was moved by his determination to visit despite China's military pressure.</p> <p>"Prime Minister Gonsalves has expressed in recent days that the Chinese military drills would not prevent him from visiting friends in Taiwan. These statements have deeply touched us," Tsai said at a welcome ceremony for Gonsalves in Taipei.</p> <p>It was unclear if Tsai had invited Gonsalves before or after Pelosi's visit. "We don't disclose internal planning or communications between governments," the Taiwanese foreign ministry said when asked by Reuters.</p> <p>Beyond the firing of 11 short-range ballistic missiles during the four earlier days of exercises, Chinese warships, fighter jets and drones maneuvered extensively around the island.</p> <p>Taiwan's defense ministry said Chinese military ships, aircraft and drones had simulated attacks on the island and its navy. It said it had sent aircraft and ships to react "appropriately."</p> <p>China's defense ministry meanwhile maintained its diplomatic pressure on the United States, defending its shelving of military-to-military talks in protest at Pelosi's visit.</p> <p>"The current tense situation in the Taiwan Strait is entirely provoked and created by the U.S. side on its own initiative, and the U.S. side must bear full responsibility and serious consequences for this," defense ministry spokesman Wu Qian said in an online post.</p> <p>"The bottom line cannot be broken, and communication requires sincerity," Wu said.</p> <p>China called off formal talks involving theater-level commands, defense policy coordination and military maritime consultations on Friday as Pelosi left the region.</p> |

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| | <p>Pentagon, State Department and White House officials condemned the move, describing it as an irresponsible overreaction.</p> <p>China's cutting of some of its few communication links with the U.S. military raises the risk of an accidental escalation over Taiwan at a critical moment, according to security analysts and diplomats.</p> <p>One U.S. official noted that Chinese officials had not responded to calls from senior Pentagon officials amid the tensions last week, but that they did not see this as a formal severing of ties with senior figures, such as U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin.</p> <p>Asked directly about those reports, defense ministry spokesman Wu said, "China's relevant countermeasures are a necessary warning to the provocations of the United States and Taiwan, and a legitimate defense of national sovereignty and security."</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Fentanyl drug of choice many opioid users |
| SOURCE | https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/feared-illicit-fentanyl-now-drug-choice-many-opioids-users-rcna40418 |
| GIST | <p>One of the deadliest street drugs, illicit fentanyl, has transitioned from a hidden killer that people often hope to avoid to one that many drug users now seek out on its own.</p> <p>The shift to intentional use of fentanyl underscores a worrying trend in the country's ongoing opioid epidemic, experts say: That a growing number of people have become so tolerant to opioids like heroin, that they're turning to the synthetic compound, which is up to 50 times stronger.</p> <p>Until recently, intentional use of fentanyl was mostly limited to the West Coast, but in the past few years, addiction specialists have seen an uptick in use of the drug across the country.</p> <p>"Two years ago, I would have thought this was crazy," said Dr. Akhil Anand, a psychiatrist at the Cleveland Clinic who specializes in addiction. Now, Anand said, he's seeing a lot more people in Ohio seeking out illicit fentanyl as their drug of choice.</p> <p>In medical settings, fentanyl is used to treat patients in severe pain, such as people just out of surgery. Fentanyl skin patches are sometimes prescribed for severe pain for use at home.</p> <p>But fentanyl first made its way into the illicit drug supply about 10 years ago, particularly in areas east of the Mississippi River. The white powder looked just like heroin, but was much cheaper. Drug dealers started mixing the two drugs as a way to stretch their heroin supply. Fentanyl also started showing up in non-opioid drugs, such as cocaine and fake versions of prescription pills.</p> <p>The shadowy addition of fentanyl to the illegal drug supply sent deadly overdoses skyrocketing among users who were unaware they were using such a strong drug. By 2021, fentanyl was involved in the vast majority of overdose deaths, according to the National Center for Health Statistics.</p> <p>Mary Ward, president of the McLeod Addiction Center in Charlotte, North Carolina, has noticed the shift toward a preference for fentanyl in her home state. "Some people thought they were buying heroin on the street, and it turned out to be fentanyl," Ward said. "They ended up liking it better."</p> <p>Alex Kral, a Berkeley, California-based epidemiologist who studies illicit drugs at the nonprofit research institute RTI International, said he's heard from users that once they start using fentanyl, it's very tough to go back to using heroin, because they don't get the same high.</p> <p>What's more, experts said, people are increasingly moving from injecting fentanyl to smoking it.</p> |

"My prediction would be that smoking fentanyl will be the norm within a year" among those who use the drug on its own, said Dr. Daniel Ciccarone, a professor of family community medicine at the University of California, San Francisco.

Ciccarone said that the shift from injecting to smoking could be seen as a form of harm reduction, in that it eliminates the risk of [infections spread through shared needles](#), including HIV, hepatitis C and bacteria that can cause heart infections.

"It's nice to not have to use your veins or not inject, and so a lot of people would prefer not to be doing that," Kral said. "I think we're going to see more and more people smoking fentanyl than injecting it."

Others were concerned that because smoking fentanyl is easier and often more appealing than injecting it, it could result in more widespread use. And there's no data to suggest that smoking fentanyl reduces the risk for [fatal overdoses](#).

"I don't know that we're at a place where we can say, 'Hey, maybe you should smoke it instead,'" said Dr. Kris Kast, clinical director of the Addiction Consult Service at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville. "It would be hard for me to feel confident in recommending that to somebody."

While fentanyl overdoses can be reversed with naloxone, the high potency of the drug means more naloxone is needed to counteract it, both Anand and Ward said.

The drug also causes a shorter-lived high than other opioids, meaning users must take the drug more frequently to avoid withdrawal.

"Usually by the time somebody is transitioning to fentanyl, they're already needing to use pretty consistently throughout the day to feel normal, to not be in withdrawal," Kast said. "As they're progressing to fentanyl, they're gonna have to use it more often in order to manage that withdrawal."

And for fentanyl users receiving treatment for their addiction, doctors must prescribe higher doses of medications like suboxone and methadone to control their withdrawals.

"Because fentanyl is so powerful, patients are having greater physical withdrawals," Ward said. "We've seen an uptick in the amount of medication we've had to prescribe for some patients just to keep them stable."

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| HEADLINE | 08/07 NYC mayor slams Texas gov. on busing |
| SOURCE | https://www.cbsnews.com/news/new-york-city-migrants-eric-adams-slams-greg-abbott-today/ |
| GIST | <p>New York City Mayor Eric Adams on Sunday slammed Texas Gov. Greg Abbott for sending migrants on buses to Democratic-run cities in the U.S., calling Abbott's actions "unimaginable."</p> <p>Adams made the remarks Sunday as he greeted a bus carrying 14 asylum seekers from Texas border towns at the Port Authority Bus Terminal. Their arrival followed 40 others who arrived on Friday.</p> <p>It is just a small portion of asylum seekers that have been transported from border towns since April, when Abbott began putting migrants on buses to Democrat-run cities after Biden's efforts to end Title 42, a pandemic-related emergency policy that enables border agents to expel migrants quickly.</p> <p>After welcoming the families to New York City, Adams slammed Abbott for using the families as political pawns.</p> <p>"When you think about this country, a country that has always been open to those who are fleeing persecution and other intolerable conditions, we've always welcomed that," Adams said. "This governor is</p> |

not doing that in Texas, but we are going to send the right message, the right tone, of being here for these families."

Adams said some of the families on the bus were forced to be there and not allowed to go where they wanted.

"This is horrific when you think about what the governor is doing, the governor of Texas, after months of traveling across the border, placing them on the bus with no direction," Adams said.

In a statement on Friday, Abbott defended Operation Lone Star, claiming it has filled in the "dangerous gaps left by the Biden Administration's refusal to secure the border."

"Since the launch of Operation Lone Star, the multi-agency effort has led to more than 290,700 migrant apprehensions and more than 18,000 criminal arrests, with more than 15,400 felony charges reported," Abbott's statement read. "In the fight against fentanyl, DPS has seized over 325.9 million lethal doses throughout the state. Texas has also transported over 6,500 migrants to the nation's capital — and now New York City — since beginning the busing mission in April to provide much-needed relief to our overwhelmed border communities."

On Friday, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin rejected a request from D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser for the National Guard to help receive migrants bused to Washington, D.C.

The Pentagon said that providing the requested support would negatively impact the readiness of the D.C. National Guard and have adverse effects on the guard and its members, a U.S. defense official said in a statement.

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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Fear: not ready for nightmare new variant |
| SOURCE | https://www.thedailybeast.com/scientists-fear-were-not-ready-for-nightmare-new-covid-variant?ref=home |
| GIST | <p>A wave of COVID infections caused by the BA.5 subvariant has crested. All over the world, daily new cases, hospitalizations and deaths are going down.</p> <p>But the SARS-CoV-2 virus is almost certainly here to stay. Another wave is all but inevitable as new variants and subvariants mutate, compete for dominance and find new transmission pathways.</p> <p>How fast that wave comes, and how bad it gets, probably comes down to a genetic competition between different mutations of the novel-coronavirus. If we get lucky, a mild form of the virus wins out—and buys us time to prepare for a <i>worse</i> form of the virus that's almost certainly coming, sooner or later.</p> <p>If we're <i>unlucky</i>, that worse one comes sooner.</p> <p>The scientific community is taking nothing for granted. "What we have learned from this pandemic is to expect the unexpected," Cindy Prins, a University of Florida epidemiologist, told The Daily Beast.</p> <p>BA.5, an offshoot of the basic Omicron variant, was still dominant when epidemiologists began looking for the version of COVID that might come <i>after</i> BA.5. They've identified two main possibilities.</p> <p>The best of the likely possibilities is yet another form of Omicron, a variant our immune systems recognize and know how to beat. The worst is some brand-new variant that might slip right past our antibodies. A Pi, Rho or Sigma variant, if you will.</p> <p>Either outcome is possible. The only thing experts don't expect is for COVID to just... disappear. "The virus always figured out a way to survive," John Swartzberg, a professor emeritus of infectious diseases and vaccinology at the University of California-Berkeley's School of Public Health, told The Daily Beast. "I see nothing that suggests it's not going to continue to do that."</p> |

BA.5 is the third major subvariant of Omicron, itself the third major variant of the virus after Alpha and Delta. BA.1, the baseline Omicron, became dominant late last year, replacing forms of Delta.

BA.1 wasn't as lethal as Delta was, owing mostly to widespread immunity from [vaccines](#) and past infection. The worst day for BA.1 deaths, 13,000 on Feb. 9, was less catastrophic than the worst day for Delta deaths, 18,000 on Jan. 20.

But BA.1 was *way* more contagious than Delta. Some epidemiologists described it as [the most transmissible respiratory virus they'd ever seen](#). BA.1 drove a record wave of infections that peaked at nearly 4.1 million new cases globally on Jan. 19.

The BA.1 wave led to two smaller surges in cases as new Omicron subvariants took over. BA.1 cases subsided in February; BA.2 drove them back up in March. BA.2 infections eased in May. BA.5 drove them back up in June.

The BA.5 surge peaked with 1.6 million new cases on July 20 and 4,500 deaths on July 27. Now infections and deaths are dropping [almost everywhere that isn't Japan](#).

The relative decline in COVID belies what is, by our pre-pandemic standards, still widespread suffering. "It is quite a reflection of what we have faced during the past few years that we could be in a situation with more than 120,000 known new infections per day, more than 43,000 hospitalizations per day—with 5,000 in ICUs—and 450 deaths per day [in the U.S.] and be in a mindset where we are thinking, 'This is not so bad, we have seen worse,'" Anthony Alberg, a University of South Carolina epidemiologist, told The Daily Beast.

And the reprieve is temporary. If the last 32 months are any guide, the next COVID wave will build this winter. The only variable is the form of the virus. Is the next dominant form of SARS-CoV-2 the fourth major Omicron subvariant? Or a totally new variant?

The distinction matters a lot. All the Omicron sublineages share certain key mutations, especially around the virus' spike protein, the part of the pathogen that helps it grab onto and infect our cells.

By now billions of people have antibodies that recognize those mutations, whether the antibodies are from one of [the safe and highly-effective vaccines](#) or from past infection. It's the steady build-up of immunity over the past two years that's kept death rates down even as infection rates go up. A lot of people have caught COVID since last winter—some for the second or third time. Most had mild cases.

If yet another offspring of Omicron becomes dominant in the next few months, that trend *should* continue. There'll *probably* be a weeks-long surge in cases. But deaths *might* increase only slightly.

Our antibodies are ready, said Edwin Michael, an epidemiologist at the Center for Global Health Infectious Disease Research at the University of South Florida who has built sophisticated computer models for simulating the COVID pandemic.

"Naturally-acquired immunity is long lasting, estimated to 2.5 years in our models, and new infections mostly therefore arise in those losing their vaccine-induced immunity which decays faster," Michael told The Daily Beast. "This results in a steady but smaller-sized rise and fall of cases, the fluctuations or oscillations getting progressively smaller in size over time until an apparent endemic steady state is reached."

But if we get Pi, Rho or Sigma, brace for possible disaster.

New variants of a virus become dominant through radical mutations that significantly change how the pathogen behaves—and give it a leg up over its predecessors. With every new variant, there's a chance it's

changed so much that our antibodies no longer recognize it. “A major genetic shift that would greatly increase its ability to infect humans regardless of vaccination status and prior infections,” according to Alberg.

Epidemiologists call that “immune escape.” It’s the nightmare scenario when it comes to viruses. Michael modeled the surge of a major immune-escape variant. How bad it gets depends on whether the new variant dodges vaccine-induced antibodies, natural antibodies from past infection or both. “If the immune evasiveness acts similarly on both forms of immunity, then you will get significantly large repeat waves forming depending on the exact rate and strength by which escape occurs,” Michael said.

There are reasons to believe another Omicron sublineage is likeliest to come next. Geneticists scrutinizing viral samples have noted four forms of Omicron vying for dominance in recent weeks. BA.5, of course. But also BA.5.2, BA.2.75 and BA.4.6.

BA.5.2 is a slightly mutated form of BA.5 and probably doesn’t have enough advantages to outcompete its predecessor, Kristian Andersen, director of infectious disease genomics at the Scripps Research Translational Institute in California, told The Daily Beast. “So I think we’ll see BA.2.75 or something completely different become dominant.”

That “something completely different” hasn’t showed up yet in viral surveillance, meaning BA.2.75 might have a head start.

If there’s a wild card, it might be BA.4.6, a subvariant of BA.4, which is a close cousin of BA.5. “We don’t know much about .4.6 in terms of structure,” Swartzberg said. It’s possible that BA.4.6 mutated for significant immune escape despite being just another Omicron subvariant. “We could wish for a new subvariant of Omicron that is so successful at evading immunity [that] it could be a serious problem for us.”

“Be careful what you wish for,” Swartzberg quipped.

Still, as long as Omicron and its offspring are dominant, there’s a decent chance the next COVID wave will be a fairly small one. That buys us time to prepare for the wave after that—and the increasing likelihood, over time, that some immune-evasive variant eventually shows up.

No one expects another round of major lockdowns, even with a highly immune-evasive new form of COVID raging across the planet. Instead, our best tool against Pi, Rho or Sigma might be new formulations of the messenger-RNA vaccines from Moderna and Pfizer.

MRNA is inherently flexible. It’s a plug-and-play delivery system for tiny scraps of genetic material that prompt a particular immune response. Change the genetic material and you change the vaccine—and the antibodies it induces.

The current mRNA vaccines were designed for the Alpha variant, although they still work really well against Delta and Omicron. Anticipating that an immune-escape variant is coming, both Pfizer and Moderna are working on new “multivalent” vaccine formulations with broader effectiveness against an even wider range of SARS-CoV-2 variants.

But these new formulations aren’t quite ready. Both Massachusetts-based Moderna and Pfizer in New York have run large-scale trials of their multivalent vaccines, but the U.S. Food and Drug Administration is still scrutinizing the data.

Whether and when the FDA approves new vaccine mixes, a precondition for health agencies in many other countries to do the same, could depend on whether and when an immune-escape variant shows up. Swartzberg said the new jabs could get FDA approval in around a month.

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| | Obviously, regulators would prefer to study the new formulations without the pressure of a major surge in infections and deaths. And they just might get that, if the next wave is a BA.2.75 wave instead of something potentially much worse. |
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| HEADLINE | 08/08 China beach resort expands lockdown |
| SOURCE | https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/covid-cases-rise-chinas-hainan-tourists-stranded-88082856 |
| GIST | <p>BEIJING -- The capital of China's Hainan province has locked down its residents for 13 hours on Monday as a COVID-19 outbreak grows on the tropical island during the summer school holidays.</p> <p>The temporary lockdown of Haikou city from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. follows an ongoing and indefinite lockdown of the beach resort of Sanya since Saturday — which is confining vacationers to their hotels for a week — and lockdowns that started in four other cities in Hainan on Sunday.</p> <p>More than 470 new cases were recorded in the province on Sunday, of which 245 did not show symptoms. Overall, China reported more than 760 new daily cases, the National Health Commission said Monday.</p> <p>Some 80,000 tourists have reportedly been stranded by the lockdown in Sanya. Those wanting to depart have to test negative five times over seven days.</p> <p>China has stuck steadfastly to a “zero-COVID” policy, despite the economic and social costs. It has credited that approach with keeping hospitalization and death rates lower than in other countries that have opened up amid high vaccination rates and more effective treatments.</p> <p>Hong Kong, a semi-autonomous Chinese city, announced Monday that it would reduce a mandatory hotel quarantine for overseas arrivals to three days from the current one week. The new policy takes effect Friday.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/05 Canada to ban import of handguns |
| SOURCE | https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/05/canada-handgun-import-ban/ |
| GIST | <p>TORONTO — The Canadian government will ban the import of handguns, officials said Friday, the latest in a series of gun-control measures under Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.</p> <p>Because the great majority of handguns in Canada are imported, the move effectively caps the number of such weapons already in the country at the current level without banning them outright.</p> <p>The regulatory measure, announced by Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino and Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly, follows a bill introduced by the government in May to implement a “national freeze” on buying, importing, selling and transferring handguns.</p> <p>Friday’s measure allows the government to impose that freeze without waiting for Parliament, which is on a summer break until September, to pass the legislation. It’s expected to come into effect in two weeks, reducing the window for gun stores to amass merchandise.</p> <p>“They have no place in any community, any neighborhood or any street,” Mendicino said at a news conference Friday outside a Catholic school in Etobicoke, Ontario. He said Toronto, in particular, has seen “too much gun violence” in recent years.</p> <p>Joly said she would use her authority as foreign minister to deny import and export permits to effect the ban.</p> <p>Local media outlets have reported that handgun sales have skyrocketed since Trudeau’s government announced the freeze, prompting some lawmakers to express concern about a run on handguns by legal gun owners looking to stock up before the legislation passed.</p> |

Gun control enjoys broad support here. But critics say the focus on limiting handgun ownership unfairly targets law-abiding owners while doing little to stamp out the root problem: guns smuggled illegally across the border.

Toronto's police chief said in November that roughly 80 percent of the firearms involved in gun violence in Canada's most populous city come from the United States, which he noted has a significant gun culture, making it a "very difficult" issue to address.

"The biggest problem we have in the city is the volume of guns that are coming across the border," Chief James Ramer said.

The legislation introduced in May, known as C-21, also includes "red flag" laws that would allow judges to temporarily take firearms from people deemed to be a danger to themselves or others, the removal of gun licenses from people who have committed domestic violence, and stiffer penalties for gun smuggling and trafficking.

The legislation and the ban both include exemptions for those, such as armed security guards, who hold an "authorization to carry" as part of their work, those who have an "authorization to carry" for protection, and authorized high-performance sport shooting athletes and coaches.

Canada imported more than \$28.2 million in revolvers and pistols in 2021, according to government data, with nearly two-thirds of that volume coming from the United States. Total imports were up 7.7 percent from the previous year, but down from a recent peak of \$34.7 million in 2018.

Mass shootings are relatively rare here compared with in the United States, but the rate of firearm-related homicides has increased since 2013, according to data from Statistics Canada.

The government statistics agency reported that more than 60 percent of gun-related violent crime in urban centers in 2020 involved handguns. But it also said there were many gaps and limitations in the data, including on the "source of firearms used in crime" and "whether a gun used in crime was stolen, illegally purchased or smuggled into the country." No province requires investigators to send guns used in crimes for tracing.

A Toronto police spokesman said that publicly available data on guns from the United States doesn't reflect the true number of firearms in Canada because most that are used in crimes are illegally purchased or smuggled across the border. "The crime guns that we seize in Toronto have been banned since the mid-90s," the spokesman said. "But those guns are still available in the U.S."

The Canada Border Services Agency said it seized 1,203 firearms from 2021 to 2022. In May, a Yorkshire terrier named Pepper [thwarted](#) an attempt to smuggle 11 handguns across the border from Michigan to Ontario using a six-rotor drone.

Some [2.2 million people in Canada are licensed firearms owners](#), the Royal Canadian Mounted Police reported in 2020, and more than 1.1 million firearms are registered. Mendicino said 55,000 firearms have been registered in the past year alone.

Trudeau's government pledged stiffer gun-control measures during the federal election campaign last year.

Advertisement

In 2020, Trudeau announced a ban on 1,500 makes and models of "military-style assault weapons," after a [gunman posing as a police officer rampaged across Nova Scotia](#) over two weekend days, setting structures ablaze and killing 22 people, including a Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer, in Canada's deadliest mass shooting.

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| | <p>Last week, the government outlined how much it is proposing to compensate gun owners who turn in those weapons under a mandatory buyback program.</p> <p>During hearings in a public inquiry this year on the “causes, context and circumstances” of the Nova Scotia attack, evidence was presented on the origin of the shooter’s large cache of weapons.</p> <p>Gabriel Wortman, a denturist, did not possess a firearms license and obtained his weapons illegally. The commission heard that there were “two, and potentially three,” instances when police received information about his access to firearms. Little, if anything, was done, according to testimony.</p> <p>Several of the weapons were traced and sourced to gun stores in Maine. A friend there told police that Wortman took one or more of the guns without his knowledge or permission, but he gave the shooter a Ruger P89 pistol “as a sign of gratitude” for his help with “tree removals and other odd jobs at his residence.”</p> <p>An AR-15 came from a gun shop in California, but Wortman first saw it at a gun show in Maine and another person bought it for him. Witnesses told police after the shooting that Wortman would disassemble the firearms and roll them up in his pickup truck’s payload cover to smuggle them across the border.</p> <p>Wortman was shot to death by Royal Canadian Mounted Police at a service area in Enfield, Nova Scotia, ending his rampage. Police have not charged any of the individuals who helped him obtain the weapons, including those who might have broken U.S. laws.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/07 France tackles its worst drought on record |
| SOURCE | https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/temperatures-rise-france-tackles-its-worst-drought-record-2022-08-07/ |
| GIST | <p>PARIS, Aug 7 (Reuters) - France on Sunday braced for a fourth heatwave this summer as its worst drought on record left parched villages without safe drinking water and farmers warned of a looming milk shortage in the winter.</p> <p>Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne's office has set up a crisis team to tackle a drought that has forced scores of villages to rely on water deliveries by truck, prompted state-run utility EDF to curb nuclear power output and stressed crops.</p> <p>Temperatures were expected to hit 37 Celsius in the southwest on Sunday before the baking hot air spreads north early in the week.</p> <p>"This new heatwave is likely to set in," La Chaine Meteo, similar to the U.S. cable service The Weather Channel, said.</p> <p>National weather agency Meteo France said it was the worst drought since records began in 1958 and that the drought was expected to worsen until at least the middle of the month. On average, less than 1cm of rain fell across France in July.</p> <p>The corn harvest is expected to be 18.5% lower this year compared with 2021, the agriculture ministry has said, just as Europeans contend with higher food prices as a result of lower-than-normal grain exports from Russia and Ukraine.</p> <p>Meanwhile, a shortage of fodder because of the drought meant there could be a shortage of milk in the months ahead, the National Federation of Farmers' Unions said.</p> <p>Nuclear operator EDF last week reduced its power output at a plant in southwestern France due to high river temperatures on the Garonne, and it has issued rolling warnings for reactors along the Rhone river.</p> |

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| | <p>The hot weather has compounded the utility's problems, with corrosion problems and extended maintenance at half of its 56 reactors reducing capacity as Europe faces an energy crunch.</p> <p>Water restrictions are in place across almost all of mainland France to conserve water, including in many places hosepipe and irrigation bans.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Ukraine nuclear plant shelled again |
| SOURCE | https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/uns-nuclear-watchdog-warns-ukraine-plant-russia-shells-dozens-towns-2022-08-07/ |
| GIST | <p>Aug 7 (Reuters) - Ukraine said on Sunday that renewed Russian shelling had damaged three radiation sensors and hurt a worker at the Zaporizhzhia power plant, in the second hit in consecutive days on Europe's largest nuclear facility.</p> <p>Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy called Saturday night's shelling "Russian nuclear terror" that warranted more international sanctions, this time on Moscow's nuclear sector. Kyiv said Russia hit a power line at the plant on Friday.</p> <p>However, the Russian-installed authority of the area said Ukraine hit the site with a multiple rocket launcher, damaging administrative buildings and an area near a storage facility.</p> <p>Reuters could not verify either side's version.</p> <p>Events at the Zaporizhzhia site have alarmed the world.</p> <p>"(It) underlines the very real risk of a nuclear disaster," International Atomic Energy Agency head Rafael Mariano Grossi warned on Saturday.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Israel pummels targets in Gaza Strip |
| SOURCE | https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/israeli-airstrike-kills-2nd-top-islamic-jihad-commander-88056624 |
| GIST | <p>GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip -- Israeli aircraft pummeled targets in the Gaza Strip on Sunday, driving up the Palestinian death toll, and militants fired repeated rounds of rockets that reached deep into Israel, even as reports emerged that the sides were seeking a cease-fire deal.</p> <p>While Egyptian officials worked on an agreement, another seven people were killed in Gaza, bringing the Palestinian death toll to 36 since the start of the Israeli offensive Friday. Among the dead were 11 children and four women. The Palestinian Health Ministry said more than 311 people were wounded since Friday.</p> <p>The Iran-backed Palestinian Jihad militant group has fired hundreds of rockets at Israel in response, and the risk of the cross-border fighting turning into a full-fledged war remained so long as no truce is reached. Israel says some of the dead were killed by misfired rockets.</p> <p>Gaza's ruling Hamas group, which fought an 11-day war with Israel in May 2021, appeared to stay on the sidelines for now, possibly because it fears Israeli reprisals and undoing economic understandings with Israel, including Israeli work permits for thousands of Gaza residents, that bolster its control.</p> <p>If it does, the cease-fire efforts could bear fruit. According to an Egyptian intelligence official, both Israel and the Palestinian militant groups gave initial approval on a cease-fire offer earlier Sunday but it wasn't clear when it might take effect. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to discuss the continuing talks.</p> |

While Israel did not address the ceasefire talks, Islamic Jihad spokesman Tareq Selmi played down expectations for a deal, citing the rising Palestinian death toll.

“There is no talk of a cease-fire until now, there is no talk of mediators, the talk is on the aggressive conduct of the Zionist enemy,” he said. “The battle is going on.”

Israel launched its operation with a strike Friday on a leader of the Islamic Jihad, and followed up on Saturday with another targeted strike on a second prominent leader.

The second Islamic Jihad commander, Khaled Mansour, was killed in an airstrike on an apartment building in the Rafah refugee camp in southern Gaza late Saturday, which also killed two other militants and five civilians.

Mansour, the Islamic Jihad commander for southern Gaza, was in the apartment of a member of the group when the missile struck, flattening the three-story building and badly damaging nearby houses.

“Suddenly, without warning, the house next to us was bombed and everything became black and dusty with smoke in the blink of an eye,” said Wissam Jouda, who lives next to the targeted building.

Ahmed al-Qaissi, another neighbor, said his wife and son were among the wounded, suffering shrapnel injuries. To make way for rescue workers, al-Qaissi agreed to have part of his house demolished.

As a funeral for Mansour began in the Gaza Strip on Sunday afternoon, the Israeli military said it was striking suspected “Islamic Jihad rocket launch posts.” Smoke could be seen from the strikes as thumps from their explosions rattled Gaza. Israeli airstrikes and rocket fire followed for hours as sirens wailed in central Israel. As the sunset call to prayer sounded Sunday night in Gaza, sirens wailed as far north as Tel Aviv.

Israel says some of the deaths during this round were caused by errant rocket fire, including one incident in the Jebaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza in which six Palestinians were killed Saturday. On Sunday, a projectile hit a home in the same area of Jebaliya, killing two men. Palestinians held Israel responsible, while Israel said it was investigating whether the area was hit by an errant rocket.

Israel's Defense Ministry said mortars fired from Gaza struck the Erez border crossing into Israel, used by thousands of Gazans a day. The mortars damaged the roof and shrapnel hit the hall's entrance, the ministry said. The crossing has been closed amid the fighting.

The Rafah strike was the deadliest so far in the current round of fighting, which was initiated by Israel on Friday with the targeted killing of Islamic Jihad's commander for northern Gaza.

Israel has said it took action against the militant group because of concrete threats of an imminent attack, but has not provided details. Caretaker Prime Minister Yair Lapid, who is an experienced diplomat but untested in overseeing a war, unleashed the offensive less than three months before a general election in which he is campaigning to keep the job.

In a statement Sunday, Lapid said the military would continue to strike targets in Gaza “in a pinpoint and responsible way in order to reduce to a minimum the harm to noncombatants.” Lapid said the strike that killed Mansour was “an extraordinary achievement.”

“The operation will continue as long as necessary,” Lapid said.

Israel estimates its airstrikes have killed about 15 militants.

Islamic Jihad has fewer fighters and supporters than Hamas, and little is known about its weapons arsenal. Both groups call for Israel's destruction, but have different priorities, with Hamas constrained by the demands of governing.

The Israeli army said militants in Gaza fired about 580 rockets toward Israel. The army said its air defenses had intercepted many of them, with two of those shot down being fired toward Jerusalem. Islamic Jihad has fewer fighters and supporters than Hamas.

Air raid sirens sounded in the Jerusalem area for the first time Sunday since last year's Israel-Hamas war.

Jerusalem is typically a flashpoint during periods of cross-border fighting between Israel and Gaza. On Sunday, hundreds of Jews, including firebrand ultra-nationalist lawmaker Itamar Ben Gvir, visited a sensitive holy site in Jerusalem, known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary. The visit, under heavy police protection, ended without incident, police said.

Such demonstrative visits by Israeli hard-liners seeking to underscore Israeli claims of sovereignty over contested Jerusalem have sparked violence in the past. The holy site sits on the fault line of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and is central to rival narratives of Palestinians and Israeli Jews.

In Palestinian cities and towns in the West Bank, Israeli security forces said they detained 19 people on suspicion of belonging to the Islamic Jihad during overnight raids.

The fighting began with Israel's killing of a senior Islamic Jihad commander in a wave of strikes Friday that Israel said were meant to prevent an imminent attack.

By Sunday, Hamas still appeared to stay out of the battle. The group has a strong incentive to avoid another war. Last year's Israel-Hamas war, one of four major conflicts and several smaller battles over the last 15 years, exacted a staggering toll on the impoverished territory's 2.3 million Palestinian residents.

Since the last war, Israel and Hamas have reached tacit understandings based on trading calm for work permits and a slight easing of the border blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt when Hamas overran the territory 15 years ago. Israel has issued 12,000 work permits to Gaza laborers, and has held out the prospect of granting another 2,000 permits.

The lone power plant in Gaza ground to a halt at noon Saturday due to lack of fuel. Israel has kept its crossing points into Gaza closed since Tuesday. With the new disruption, Gazans can use only four hours of electricity a day, increasing their reliance on private generators and deepening the territory's chronic power crisis amid peak summer heat.

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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Firefighters battle Cuba oil storage blaze |
| SOURCE | https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/firefighters-battle-blaze-oil-storage-site-2nd-day-88065340 |
| GIST | <p>HAVANA -- Cuban firefighters were joined by special teams sent by Mexico and Venezuela on Sunday as they battled for a second day to control a fire blazing at a big oil tank farm in the western province of Matanzas.</p> <p>The blaze began Friday night when lightning struck a storage tank during a thunder storm, and the fire spread to a second tank early Saturday, triggering a series of explosions, officials have said.</p> <p>Authorities said Sunday that a body found at the site had been identified as firefighter Juan Carlos Santana, 60. Officials previously said a group of 17 firefighters had gone missing while trying to quell flames, but there was no word if he was one of those.</p> <p>A total of 122 people had been treated for injuries, including five in critical condition, officials said.</p> <p>Provincial Gov. Mario Sabines said Sunday that 4,946 people had been evacuated, mostly from the Dubrocq neighborhood, which is next to the Matanzas Supertanker Base in Matanzas city. The facility's eight huge storage tanks hold oil used to fuel electricity generation.</p> |

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| | <p>Dense black smoke billowed up from the tank farm and spread westward more than 100 kilometers (62 miles) to Havana. The Ministry of Science and Technology said Sunday that the cloud contained sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, carbon monoxide and other toxic substances.</p> <p>The disaster comes as Cuba struggles with a severe economic and energy crisis, with frequent power blackouts hitting during a torrid summer. It was unknown how much fuel had been lost to the flames.</p> <p>Cuba's government had appealed for help Saturday from oil nations, and specialized firefighting teams began arriving with their equipment from Mexico and Venezuela late Saturday.</p> <p>“The support (is) in the prevention of risks and also help to quell the fire by means of cooling based on water and foam,” Mexican Brig. Gen. Juan Bravo said upon arrival. “We hope that more support will arrive soon, such as chemical material.”</p> <p>Deputy Foreign Minister Carlos Fernández de Cossío said Saturday evening that the U.S. government had offered technical help. On his Twitter account, he said the “proposal is in the hands of specialists for the due coordination.”</p> <p>Minutes later, President Miguel Díaz-Canel thanked Mexico, Venezuela, Russia, Nicaragua, Argentina and Chile for their offers of help.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/07 China exports rise, trade surplus record |
| SOURCE | https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/china-july-exports-rise-trade-surplus-record-high-88062302 |
| GIST | <p>BEIJING -- China's export growth continued to rise in July, sending trade surplus to a record high, according to government data.</p> <p>China's exports grew 18% to \$333 billion compared to the same period last year, and were up from 17.9% in June, according to data from China's customs.</p> <p>Imports, however, remained soft, growing 2.3% in July compared to a year ago. That was lower than economists' estimates of 4%, and suggests weak domestic demand amid lockdowns across the country as China attempts to stem the outbreak of COVID-19.</p> <p>China's total trade surplus reached an all-time high of \$101.3 billion in July, breaking the record set in June.</p> <p>The country's economy has rebounded from earlier in the year, when tough COVID-19 restrictions including a two-month lockdown in Shanghai and other measures across China disrupted manufacturing and logistics.</p> <p>While manufacturing and supply chain issues have eased, recovery may be affected by fresh COVID-19 outbreaks, weak domestic demand and external uncertainties such as rising inflation in developed countries including Britain and the U.S.</p> <p>The International Monetary Fund in July predicted that China's economy would grow 3.3% this year, below the ruling Communist Party's target of 5.5% set in April.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/07 China keeps up pressure on Taiwan |
| SOURCE | https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/china-pressure-taiwan-4th-day-drills-88058831 |
| GIST | <p>BEIJING -- China said Sunday it carried out its fourth consecutive day of military drills in the air and sea around Taiwan in the wake of U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to the self-ruled island, despite international calls to calm the tensions.</p> |

The People's Liberation Army said the exercises focused on testing its long-range air and ground strikes. It did not say if it will continue the drills after Sunday.

Taiwan said that it continued to detect several batches of Chinese aircraft, ships and drones operating around the Taiwan Strait, which separates the island and mainland China, and "simulating attacks on the island of Taiwan and our ships at sea." Taiwan's defence ministry said it detected a total of 66 Chinese aircraft and 14 Chinese warships conducting joint naval and air exercises around the Taiwan Strait. In response, Taiwan deployed air reconnaissance patrols, naval ships, and shore-based missiles, and said that it will continue to closely monitor the situation.

Taiwan's official Central News Agency meanwhile reported that Taiwan's army will conduct live-fire artillery drills in southern Pingtung County on Tuesday and Thursday, in response to the Chinese exercises.

The drills will include snipers, combat vehicles, armored vehicles as well as attack helicopters, said the report, which cited an anonymous source.

China set up no-go areas around Taiwan for the four-day drills it announced immediately after Pelosi's trip to Taipei on Tuesday and Wednesday that infuriated Beijing, which saw it as a violation of the "one-China" policy. China claims Taiwan and has threatened to annex it by force if necessary. The two sides split in 1949 after a civil war, but Beijing considers visits to Taiwan by foreign officials as recognizing its sovereignty.

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense emphasized that its military was surveilling the situation and had dispatched aircraft and ships to respond accordingly.

Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen has called on the international community to "support democratic Taiwan" and "halt any escalation of the regional security situation."

China has so far conducted missiles strikes on targets in the seas around Taiwan, and sent warships across the Taiwan Straits median line. It has also cut off defense and climate talks with the U.S. and imposed sanctions on Pelosi in retaliation for her visit.

The Biden administration and Pelosi say the U.S. remains committed to the "one-China" policy that recognizes Beijing as the legitimate government but allows informal relations and defense ties with Taipei.

The U.S. however criticized Beijing's actions in the Taiwan Strait, with White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre calling them "fundamentally irresponsible."

"There's no need and no reason for this escalation," Jean-Pierre said.

Singapore's coordinating minister for national security Teo Chee Hean said in a Facebook post Saturday that the U.S.-China tensions over Taiwan is "an issue that can lead to conflict and war to the detriment of all parties involved, especially the people in Taiwan."

The tensions have a negative impact on Southeast Asia, Teo said, adding: "We hope that wisdom will prevail."

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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Russian war dead state secret, taboo topic |
| SOURCE | https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/07/russia-ukraine-war-deaths-toll/ |
| GIST | When Yevgeny Chubarin told his mother he was joining the Russian army to fight against Ukraine, she cried and begged him not to go. But his exhilaration shone through. By May 15, he had an AK-47 and was on his way. The 24-year-old stone-factory worker was killed the next day. |

Stories like his are taboo in Russia, where the wrenching grief of many families is buried beneath the triumphant bombast of state media. The war is portrayed as an existential struggle for survival, against “Nazis” as well as NATO, and a virtual news blackout about the bloody toll underscores Kremlin anxiety about the durability of its manufactured support.

Yet some stories seep out. Vladimir Krot was a 59-year-old Soviet-trained pilot, a retired Afghan war veteran, who begged to serve in Ukraine. He kept asking despite repeated rejections and, in June, as casualties mounted, he finally was told “yes.” Krot died just days later, when his SU-25 jet went down during a [training flight](#) in southern Russia. He left behind a wife and 8-year-old daughter.

The number of war dead is a state secret. It is a crime to question the invasion or criticize the military. Independent journalists who speak to bereaved relatives or [cover funerals](#) have been arrested and told that showing such “tears and suffering” is bad for public morale. Authorities have ordered some online memorial pages to be shut down.

The Kremlin’s priority has been to prevent angry voices of mourning families and antiwar activists from coming together and gaining traction. Information about war dead could deter Russia’s increasingly urgent [recruitment effort](#), scraping up prisoners with military experience and offering highly paid contracts for deployments.

Internal security agents visited Dmitry Shkrebets this summer after he accused Russian authorities of lying about how many sailors died when the Black Sea flagship Moskva [was sunk by](#) Ukrainian missiles on April 13. His son Yegor, one of the conscripts onboard, was listed as “missing.” The agents accused Shkrebets of making bomb threats and confiscated his laptop, as he detailed on VKontakte, Russia’s version of Facebook. On Tuesday, 111 days after Yegor’s death, the military finally gave his father a death certificate.

“It will never be easier,” Shkrebets wrote in a post. “There will never be true joy. We will never be the same again. We have become different, we have become more unhappy, but also stronger, tougher. We no longer fear even those who should be feared.”

But independent analyst Bobo Lo of the Lowy Institute, an Australian think tank, believes the Kremlin has largely contained the risk of unrest over the high casualty count. Because most people are so cautious about airing dissent, gauging the real level of support for the war is difficult. Pollster VCIOM, which is close to government authorities, reported in June that 72 percent of Russians back the fighting.

Politically, Russian President Vladimir Putin “has been able to defend this,” said Lo, a former deputy head of mission at the Australian Embassy in Moscow. “Partly through controlling the information narrative, but also because this is now seen as a war against the West.”

With many families afraid to speak out and no credible casualty count, independent media and rights groups keep their own tallies. Their numbers, based only on confirmed open-source death reports, are modest.

The independent Russian outlet Mediazona and BBC News Russian counted 5,185 war dead as of July 29, with the greatest losses in remote and impoverished areas such as the southern region of Dagestan and the Siberian region of Buryatia. The wealthy cities Moscow and St. Petersburg were barely touched, the two outlets concluded. Moscow, with 12.5 million residents, lost just 11 servicemen, and St. Petersburg, 35.

By contrast, the CIA and British intelligence agency MI6 estimate that at least 15,000 Russians have been killed since their country’s invasion of Ukraine in late February, losses equal to the decade-long Soviet war in Afghanistan. And that was “probably a conservative estimate,” MI6 chief Richard Moore told the Aspen Security Forum last month.

Chubarin's death was an ominous reflection of the Russian military's desperation. A former conscript from the Karelia region, he signed a three-month contract and was too excited to ask how much he would be paid. His mother, Nina Chubarina, thinks he wanted to prove himself as a man. She wonders if he was trying to win back his ex-wife.

"He knew it was dangerous," she said in a recent interview. He left on May 11, sending cheerful messages and videos after he arrived in Belgorod in southern Russia. He got little training in his four days there, then made a rushed call home. He had been issued a machine gun and was headed to the war.

"That was it. That was the last time we spoke," she said. The military told her he was found dead near Mariupol on May 16. "He was a very brave guy, was not afraid of anything. He was so cheerful and open and so kind."

Chubarina, a dairy farmworker, does not question the war. She just rereads a poem her son sent her while a conscript in 2017, about growing up and leaving her behind: "Forgive me for all the pain that has fallen on your weary shoulders. Please accept my soldier's bow. It is from the bottom of my heart."

Sergei Dustin of Baltiysk refuses to be quiet. His daughter, Alexandra, married a marine named Maksim and became a widow at 19. He vented his rage on Facebook, saying Russians needed to ask why their sons were dying.

He described the war as a "massacre started by crazy old men who think they are great geopoliticians and super strategists, incapable, in fact, of anything but destruction, threats against the world, puffing out their cheeks and endless lies."

Some responses called him a traitor. His son-in-law had left in the winter for "training exercises" and ended up in Ukraine. An old friend from Ukraine was fighting on the other side. Dustin hoped neither would die.

He refused to hear any details about how the young man died, and his daughter shut herself inside her grief. "It's very hard for her to understand and acknowledge that her husband was taking part in an operation that, to put it mildly, was far from nice," he said. "This whole story just brings sorrow and tragedy for everyone."

Not many grieving families publicly question the war effort. The silence serves to minimize public understanding of its impact on the home front. In the eastern Siberia city of Ulan-Ude, a recent survey by the independent news site Lyudi Baikala found that few residents knew that more than 250 people from the region had been killed, a count the site calculated using open sources.

Still, cracks have appeared. In Buryatia, a group of wives of Russian soldiers made a video in June to demand that the military bring their men home. Hundreds of soldiers from the region contacted an activist group there for information on how to break their contracts, according to Alexandra Garmazhapova, founder of the Free Buryatia Foundation. Casualties on a local memorial page on VKontakte rise daily.

On Monday, the deaths of local basketball players Dmitry Lagunov and Nikolay Bagrov were confirmed. A woman named Raisa Dugarova responded on the page. "Why does Buryatia have to bury its sons every day?" she asked. "Why are we doing this?"

The following day there was another entry, about the death of Zolto Chimitov, a corporal in his early 30s who had been born in the rural village of Tsakir. He became a boxing champion, later training to be a forester. He had three children.

"Oh god, please stop this war. How many of our guys can die?" a woman named Yevgenia Yakovleva wrote. "My soul is torn from pain. I don't know how to accept this, survive and live with it."

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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Fight over tuition during Covid closures |
| SOURCE | https://www.wsj.com/articles/colleges-parents-fight-in-court-over-tuition-charged-during-pandemic-closures-11659865504?mod=hp_lead_pos5 |
| GIST | <p>Colleges and universities faced a barrage of lawsuits in the peak pandemic days of 2020 after schools shut down their campuses and moved classes online while charging students their usual tuition rates.</p> <p>Two years later, the Covid-19 tuition wars are building toward a decisive phase.</p> <p>A number of courts have issued rulings that provided a boost to students and parents seeking refunds, including last week in a case against a small private university in California. That decision followed a recent federal appeals court ruling that allowed claims to proceed against Loyola University Chicago. But those rulings stand in tension with other decisions for schools that said students don't have valid claims. Pending cases from higher-level courts could bring more clarity.</p> <p>The cases could turn on what specific promises schools made to students about in-person education—and whether students suffered any harm in the switch to remote classes, said Benjamin J. Hinks, a Boston-area employment and higher-education lawyer who has followed the litigation.</p> <p>“We’re definitely seeing a trend towards plaintiff-friendly rulings at the pretrial stages,” Mr. Hinks said. “However, these are hard-fought cases, and the fight is not over for universities.”</p> <p>Most of the cases revolve around the academic spring semester of 2020, when emergency quarantine measures in the period before vaccines forced the country’s higher-education industry to suspend in-person classes and close their physical campuses, barring access to laboratories, dormitories, libraries, student centers and athletic facilities.</p> <p>At many schools, academia’s temporary move to virtual learning didn’t come with any discounts to tuition or student service fees. But it left a trail of hundreds of lawsuits in federal and state courts demanding restitution.</p> <p>Legally, the battle isn’t so much about whether an online learning experience is inferior. Judges aren’t supposed to make judgments about academic quality under long-held doctrine insulating schools from lawsuits alleging “educational malpractice.”</p> <p>Plaintiffs have argued that schools were contractually obligated to deliver an in-person education and unfairly kept all their money.</p> <p>“Universities are wonderful places, but students are paying a lot of money. They paid for in-person access to campus, in-person education and all the amenities promised to them when they signed up, and they didn’t get that,” said Ellen Noteware, an attorney representing the plaintiffs suing Loyola.</p> <p>“People just didn’t get the experience they thought they were paying for,” she said.</p> <p>The litigation has turned on complex interpretations of state contract law and questions about what exactly colleges and universities promised students when they enrolled.</p> <p>Evidence has taken the form of course catalogs, marketing brochures, admissions letters, student handbooks and representations made on school websites. Plaintiffs have retained economists and statisticians to conduct analyses comparing the value of online and traditional degrees.</p> <p>Attorneys for the schools argue that they acted responsibly to protect the health and safety of their students, ensuring that faculty kept teaching in the midst of an unprecedented pandemic. They say they were never contractually committed to keep their campuses open and that plaintiffs are improperly asking courts to second-guess the schools’ academic judgments.</p> |

One significant recent development came in a lawsuit against University of La Verne, a private institution in California. On Tuesday, U.S. District Judge Mark C. Scarsi granted a summary judgment motion in favor of plaintiffs consisting of undergraduates who paid tuition (\$22,350 a semester) and fees at La Verne's main campus in the spring 2020 term.

Judge Scarsi, a President Donald Trump appointee, said University of La Verne entered into an implied contract with students that could be inferred from promotional materials sent to admitted students. In one such document, the school promoted its "Spotlight Weekend" where admitted students could "tour the campus and neighborhood, dig in at the dining hall, and stay overnight in a residence hall," according to his opinion. The same material touted a "beautiful, welcoming campus to call home" in a list of "10 reasons to love the University of La Verne," stated the ruling.

The judge said that although shutdown orders made it impossible for La Verne to honor its obligations, it would be unjust for the university "to retain the monetary benefits specific to in-person classes."

La Verne's lead trial counsel, David Sugden, said the university hardly profited from the pandemic shutdowns, saying the school refunded millions of dollars to students for food, housing and other expenses, and distributed millions more in scholarships and grants.

"The University of La Verne looks forward to showing the jury all the measures it took to educate its students after lockdown orders were issued," he said.

A coming jury trial will determine restitutionary damages. "This could send shock waves to universities throughout the country, especially if the jury comes back with a substantial number," said Jeffrey K. Brown of Leeds Brown Law PC, co-lead counsel for the plaintiffs.

The ruling came days after a federal appeals court in Chicago allowed a group of undergraduates to pursue a breach-of-contract claim against the city's Loyola University.

A lower-court judge last year dismissed the Loyola suit, essentially deeming the complaint to be an educational malpractice claim and thus barred. At the end of July, a three-judge panel of the Seventh U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reversed that decision in a 2-1 vote.

[Writing for the majority](#), Judge Candace Jackson-Akiwumi, a President [Biden](#) appointee, said a promise of in-person instruction could be inferred from, among other things, the fact that students enrolled in Loyola's traditional on-campus program paid higher tuition and fees than its online students.

Months earlier, a federal appeals panel in Washington, D.C., drew similar conclusions in [a case](#) against George Washington University.

Cases are also proceeding in state courts, including in Ohio, where several public universities are fighting class-action lawsuits.

The more recent favorable rulings for the plaintiffs follow a scattering of settlements—including a \$12.5 million agreement with Columbia University and non-online students enrolled in the spring of 2020—along with a string of mixed decisions in lower federal courts.

Temple University last year, for example, persuaded a federal judge to [throw out a would-be class action](#) brought by two students enrolled at the Philadelphia campus in 2020.

"The decision by many schools to transition classes online has understandably frustrated the hopes of countless students," wrote U.S. District Judge John M. Gallagher. But he said the breach-of-contract claim failed in part because students before enrollment were required to sign a one-page "Student Financial Responsibility Agreement" obligating them to pay all their tuition and fees on time.

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| | <p>That case is now before the Third U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, bundled with a lawsuit against the University of Pittsburgh.</p> <p>In a brief to the Third Circuit, nearly a dozen colleges and universities in Pennsylvania described the lawsuits as “attempts to extract a windfall from colleges and universities who expended extraordinary resources to continue their educational missions amidst a generation-defining global pandemic.”</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Ukraine drone spotters wage new type war |
| SOURCE | https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraines-drone-spotters-on-front-lines-wage-new-kind-of-war-11659870805?mod=hp_lead_pos8 |
| GIST | <p>PRYBUZKE, Ukraine—“Fire,” a Ukrainian reconnaissance unit commander said after receiving a message from the artillery team on his mobile phone’s messaging app.</p> <p>It took more than 20 seconds for the sound of an outgoing Ukrainian artillery round to reach this narrow strip of woodland on the front line between Ukrainian-held Mykolaiv and Russian-occupied Kherson in southern Ukraine.</p> <p>As the shell whistled overhead, another member of the team who goes by the call sign Zhora zoomed in on his terminal’s screen to see where it landed. A third member, Thor, leaned over to mark the location on a tablet with Kropyva, a mapping and artillery software developed for the Ukrainian military.</p> <p>A plume of dark smoke could be seen on the drone’s feed before the sound of the explosion traveled back. “Oh, that was real close!” said the 34-year-old Zhora with a smile, noting the short distance between the impact spot and a fortified Russian position sheltering a BMD armored fighting vehicle.</p> <p>That is how much of the fighting goes on these days in Ukraine, where the front lines—with the exception of some parts of the Donbas area in the east—haven’t moved much in months. The two armies try to weaken each other in daily artillery exchanges that are guided by hundreds of spotters flying drones over enemy lines.</p> <p>Abdulla, the commander of this special drone reconnaissance platoon, known as Terra, relayed the coordinates for the next round of artillery. Like most other Ukrainian soldiers, members of the platoon are allowed to be identified only by their call signs.</p> <p>Just minutes earlier, Abdulla and his men were themselves scampering to seek cover in two dugouts after Russian forces spotted their drone in the air and fired several rounds in their general direction. The rounds landed too far away to cause damage. Not far from the spot, the remains of a burned-out car marked Russia’s success in eliminating another Ukrainian drone team a few weeks earlier.</p> <p>“It’s a different kind of war now,” said Abdulla, a motorbike-race driver who obtained his law degree just before the war. “As people here say, if it comes down to exchanging gunfire, you’ve already made a mistake.” He volunteered during the 2014-15 war against Russian proxies in the Donbas area.</p> <p>“When I was in my first campaign, I thought, what on earth are those drones, I have to be the real man, carry a gun on my shoulder, go seek out the enemy,” said the 33-year-old. “I’m older and wiser now.”</p> <p>While drones have been around for decades, employed by the U.S. in Afghanistan and Iraq, and by Azerbaijan to devastating effect against Armenian forces in 2020, the high saturation of the front lines by unmanned aircraft is a unique feature of the Ukrainian war.</p> <p>Both Russia and Ukraine operate professional military drones. Russia’s large fleet of Orlan-10 winged observation drones poses a serious problem for Ukrainian forces, which often don’t have the means to shoot them down. Ukraine employs its own fixed-wing observation drones, Leleka and Furia, as well as the Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 armed drones that played an important role in destroying Russian</p> |

armored columns in the early days of the war. Kyiv has also deployed so-called kamikaze drones such as the U.S.-made Switchblade and the Polish-supplied Warmate.

Much more widespread on the front lines are off-the-shelf commercial drones, such as Chinese-made DJI quadcopters, operated by teams attached to individual battalions and companies of troops. With a retail price of around \$3,000 for a DJI Mavic 3 and upward of \$10,000 for the bigger DJI Matrice series, these drones can make all the difference on the battlefield, according to soldiers.

“They get bought by friends, by relatives, by volunteers—and then become the eyes of the front line units,” said Alex, a Ukrainian drone operator who fought in the [battle for Lysychansk](#) in the Donbas area in June. “The situation can change in 10 minutes, and you need to see what the enemy is doing right away.” The powerful Russian jamming and electronic-warfare capabilities in the Donbas area, he added, disabled the GPS navigation systems used by most other drones—but didn’t disrupt the flights of quadcopters such as DJI Mavic 3 that can be flown manually.

In confronting a much larger and better-equipped enemy, Ukraine’s military has had to become more flexible and inventive, accommodating teams of volunteers such as the Terra drone platoon into its structure. Most members of the platoon, which works with an infantry brigade on the Mykolaiv front, used to be Kyiv professionals who knew each other because of their joint interest in re-enacting medieval knight tournaments. Their preferred activity was cosplaying 15th century Flemish knights. The platoon, named after the home planet in the Warhammer 40,000 videogame, started up as part of Kyiv’s Territorial Defense when Russia invaded on Feb. 24.

On a recent day, Abdulla—who took his call sign from a character in a cult 1970 Soviet action movie—and three other soldiers, with guns, two drones in their carrying cases and backpacks full of spare batteries, got into a spray-painted pickup truck. The platoon’s drones and vehicles had been purchased with money contributed or collected by the team members themselves.

The pickup sped south of Mykolaiv, navigating around shell craters on rutted roads and passing the burned-out remains of the villages that changed hands in the first months of the war. At a strip of forest that serves as one of the unit’s launching grounds, Abdulla, Zhora and Thor jumped out and ran under the trees as the pickup sped back to avoid being spotted by Russian drones operating in the area. Thor, a 33-year-old project manager with an engineering degree, wore a patch saying “Avada Kedavra Bitch,” a reference to the deadliest curse in the Harry Potter series, next to a tourniquet on his body armor.

Unfolding a mast, Abdulla attached a transmitter to the top of a tree, creating a small Wi-Fi hot spot. “It’s time for some nonverbal communication with the Russians,” he said. Zhora, who packaged nonperforming loans for a Kyiv bank before the war, began the mission with the DJI Mavic 3 drone, piloting it against the wind and into Russian lines. The drone, the size of a book, is relatively quiet and, with adaptations, can fly as far as 4 miles.

Zhora studied the landscape of Russian trenches and fortified positions, looking for priority targets, such as artillery pieces, tanks or ammunition stocks in the open. “Would be a prize to hit that one, but it is driving way too fast,” he said as a Russian Grad multiple-rocket launcher traveled on a road in the distance. A minute later, Zhora spotted another Russian vehicle, likely an armored ambulance, careening away from a Russian position. “Maybe one of them died?” he wondered. “Or maybe someone just had too much vodka,” Abdulla replied.

There weren’t any easy pickings, and Abdulla decided to focus on the Russian fortifications where armored vehicles were parked under thick concrete panels. Only a lucky direct hit can be effective against such defenses.

The strategy, however, was more complex. Firing on these fortifications could force the Russians to react by revealing additional positions and provoking troop movements. Russian response artillery fire could be used to pinpoint and target Russian guns. And barrages in the direct vicinity of Russian positions would degrade Russian troops even if they didn’t cause physical casualties.

“It’s a cat-and-mouse game here,” said Abdulla. “They must be under stress every day. It’s very important. If one day we have to launch an offensive, or they get the order to attack, they will be demoralized and fatigued.” The Russians are constantly shelling Ukrainian positions for the same reason.

Just as the small drone was returning from the first flight, a thud of an outgoing Russian artillery round, followed by a whistle, broke the chirping of birds. Everyone dove to the ground and scrambled for cover. The shell missed by a relatively comfortable distance, as did several others that followed. “They don’t know where we are,” Abdulla said, exhaling. “We keep working.”

Tapping on his phone from the dugout, he arranged for a Ukrainian artillery team in the rear to prepare for a fire mission some 30 minutes later. He didn’t know which caliber of gun and from where. It is considered bad form to inquire about details that, if intercepted, could be used by the Russians to destroy the Ukrainian artillery.

To guide fire, Zhora launched a bigger, DJI Matrice drone that can stay in the air longer and, because of superior optics, doesn’t have to fly so close to the enemy lines. With every round, the spotters tried to bring the shells closer to the Russian positions. On this day, none apparently sustained a decisive hit.

On the previous day, one of the shells hit a patch of forest that was teeming with Russian soldiers shortly before impact.

On the following day, Abdulla said, Ukrainian artillery fire that his team directed hit a Russian infantry fighting vehicle concealed under a wooden roof, and then struck again when Russian soldiers emerged from dugouts to try extinguishing the fire. Terra’s documented hits, which the platoon posts on its YouTube and Instagram accounts, include several Russian tanks, self-propelled and towed artillery pieces and other military vehicles.

“What is demoralizing somewhat is that they have lots more stuff,” Zhora said. “You blow something up, and then you see them replace it already the next day.”

As Russian guns returned fire, prompting it to relocate, the day’s mission ended. All in all, the amount of artillery fire from both sides was apparently similar—a dramatic change from the recent past, when Russia significantly outgunned Ukrainian troops in this area. Ukrainian HIMARS missile strikes have targeted Russia bridges and logistics hubs across the Kherson region in recent weeks.

“Maybe they are running low on ammunition now,” Abdulla said. “Maybe they are saving it up for the offensive. Or maybe their commander went to headquarters for a meeting and they don’t fire without him.”

Packing up their drones, the team waited as the pickup truck roared up in reverse, and then jumped in and left the front line for the day. “We will be back to fish tomorrow,” Abdulla said. “We are the biggest predator in this body of water.”

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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Food price inflation on poorer countries |
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| SOURCE | https://www.wsj.com/articles/food-price-inflation-imposing-heavy-burden-on-poorer-countries-11659810915?mod=hp_lead_pos7 |
| GIST | <p>Across the world, food prices are rising. But because households in lower-income countries typically spend a higher percentage of their income on food, the pain in those regions is often more extreme. Many agricultural prices soared in the run-up to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, an agricultural heavyweight. Prices have fallen more recently, but lower costs won’t show up in grocery stores or market stalls for months.</p> <p>By 2030, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimates that nearly 670 million people would be facing hunger—8% of the world’s population.</p> |

Most high-income countries are dealing with inflation levels which, while high for those regions, are low compared with the rest of the world. These countries also spend less of their household income on food, causing the effects of food inflation to be less intense.

In the U.S., food costs rose 10.4% from June 2021 to June 2022. The average American household's food expenditure, meanwhile, is just 7.1% of total spending.

Still, that doesn't tell the whole story: In 2020, the lowest-income households in America spent nearly 30% of their income on food, according to the U.S. Agriculture Department.

Switzerland has one of the world's lowest food inflation rates, with food prices increasing just 1.9% since July of 2021. According to economists, the country's strong currency and agricultural tariffs have protected Switzerland from the food inflation rates seen elsewhere.

Many lower-middle-income countries have staved off high food inflation, including Vietnam and Cambodia. Both countries have food inflation rates less than or close to half the rate of the U.S., with Vietnam's at just 2.8% since July 2021. In these countries, diets are based around rice, which hasn't been affected as much by the war in Ukraine.

Countries in the center of this crisis are those experiencing both high inflation and high food expenditure. Ethiopia's food prices, for example, have risen by 38.1% since June of 2021. At the same time, the average Ethiopian household spends 44.2% of its income on food.

Global food inflation comes amid unrest in Ethiopia and a drought in the Horn of Africa. Somalia used to import 92% of its wheat from Russia and Ukraine. "Hundreds of thousands of Somalis are at very real [risk of starvation and death](#)," according to the United Nations.

And then, there are the outliers.

Lebanon—which, with an annual inflation rate of 332% as of June 2022—is suffering [the highest food inflation rate](#) in the world. The country has faced a series of headwinds driving that: an economic collapse in 2019, the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the 2020 explosion at the port of Beirut. The country's currency has crumbled, losing 90% of its value in just 18 months, jacking up the price of food imports.

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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Day 165 of the Russia invasion |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/07/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-165-of-the-invasion |
| GIST | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The UN nuclear watchdog has called for an immediate end to all military action near Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant after it was hit by shelling, causing one of the reactors to shut down and creating a "very real risk of a nuclear disaster". Rafael Mariano Grossi, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said he was "extremely concerned" by reports of damage as Zelenskiy accused Russia of using the plant "for terror".• Russia's war on Ukraine is about to enter a new phase, according to British intelligence. "The heaviest fighting [will shift] to a roughly 350km frontline stretching south-west from near Zaporizhzhia to Kherson, paralleling the Dnieper river," the UK Ministry of Defence said.• Russia is amassing troops in the south of Ukraine but the purpose of the buildup is not yet clear, UK intelligence warned. The Ministry of Defence said Russian forces could be preparing for a new assault or merely anticipating a counter-offensive from Ukraine. Ukrainian forces are focusing their targeting on bridges, ammunition depots, and rail links to affect Russia's ability to logistically resupply in Ukraine's southern regions, the ministry added.• A foreign-flagged ship arrived in Ukraine on Saturday for the first time since the war started in February, to be loaded with grain. The Ukrainian infrastructure minister Oleksandr Kubrakov said the Barbados-flagged general cargo ship Fulmar S was in the Ukrainian port of |

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| | <p>Chornomorsk and Ukraine planned to “reach the level of at least three to five vessels per day in two weeks’ [time]”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horrific video and photos appear to show a fresh atrocity with remains of a Ukrainian prisoner of war stuck on a pole outside a house in the eastern Ukrainian city of Popasna, which was captured by Russian forces in May and is close to the current frontline in the Donbas. “There is nothing human about the Russians. We are at war with non-humans,” said the Ukrainian governor of Luhansk province, Serhiy Haidai. • The head of Amnesty International’s Ukraine office has quit the human rights body in a disagreement after the group accused Ukraine’s armed forces of endangering civilians by basing troops in residential areas. Amnesty’s Ukraine head Oksana Pokalchuk said that she was resigning as she opposed the report’s publication, saying the human rights group unwittingly “created material that sounded like support for Russian narratives of the invasion”. • Dozens of Ukrainian soldiers have been burned to death inside a Russian detention centre outside Donetsk, while many others face torture under a regime of “absolute evil”, a former prisoner has said. Anna Vorosheva, a 45-year-old Ukrainian entrepreneur, was trying to deliver humanitarian supplies to Mariupol when she was arrested and held on charges of “terrorism”. • A European Union plan to cut gas use and help Germany wean itself off dependency on Russia will come into effect early next week, the bloc’s presidency has said. Last week, EU member states agreed to reduce their use of gas by 15% over the winter, with exceptions for some countries and despite opposition from Hungary. • A Russian journalist has reportedly been arrested at the border on suspicion that she could be a spy, Kosovo’s interior minister said on Saturday. Xhelal Svecla named the journalist as Daria Aslamova. “Many countries have proven that she was engaged in espionage for Russian military intelligence and that she pretended to be a journalist,” Svecla said. • An official with the Russian occupying authorities in Kherson was gravely wounded on Saturday in an attempted assassination, local Moscow-backed officials said. Vitaly Gur “is in hospital with multiple gunshot wounds, in a critical state”, an unnamed official told Russian state news agency Tass. • Meta, formerly named Facebook, has removed a network of Instagram accounts operated by a troll farm in St Petersburg, Russia. 45 Facebook accounts and 1,037 Instagram accounts were removed after the report found that about \$1,400 had been spent in rubles to pay for ads on Facebook and Instagram. |
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| HEADLINE | 08/07 China options narrow to win over Taiwan |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/07/world/asia/china-taiwan-military-unification.html |
| GIST | <p>China’s 72-hour spectacle of missiles, warships and jet fighters swarming Taiwan was designed to create a firewall — a blazing, made-for-television warning against what Beijing sees as increasingly stubborn defiance, backed by Washington, of its claims to the island.</p> <p>“We’re maintaining a high state of alert, ready for battle at all times, able to fight at any time,” declared Zu Guanghong, a Chinese navy captain in a People’s Liberation Army video about the exercises, which were expected to end on Sunday. “We have the determination and ability to mount a painful direct attack against any invaders who would wreck unification of the motherland, and would show no mercy.”</p> <p>But even if China’s display of military might discourages other Western politicians from emulating Nancy Pelosi, who enraged Beijing by visiting Taiwan, it also narrows hopes for winning over the island through negotiations. Beijing’s shock and awe tactics may deepen skepticism in Taiwan that it can ever reach a peaceful and lasting settlement with the Chinese Communist Party, especially under Xi Jinping as its leader.</p> <p>“Nothing is going to change after the military exercises, there’ll be one like this and then another,” said Li Wen-te, a 63-year-old retired fisherman in Liuqiu, an island off the southwestern coast of Taiwan, less than six miles from China’s drills.</p> |

“They’re as bullying as always,” he said, adding a Chinese saying, “digging deep in soft soil,” which means “give them an inch and they will take a mile.”

Mr. Xi has now shown he is willing to bring out an intimidating military stick to try to beat back what Beijing regards as a dangerous alliance of Taiwanese opposition and American support. Chinese military drills across six zones around Taiwan, which on Sunday included joint air and sea exercises to hone long-range airstrike capabilities, allowed the military to practice blockading the island in the event of an invasion.

While the exercises were scheduled to end on Sunday in Taiwan, the Taiwanese authorities were not sure they were done, and the Chinese military did not explicitly declare that they had been completed.

In the face of continuing pressures, the policy carrots that China has used to entice Taiwan toward unification may carry even less weight. During previous eras of better relations, China welcomed Taiwan’s investments, farm goods and entertainers.

The result may be deepening mutual distrust that some experts warn could, at an extreme, bring Beijing and Washington into all-out conflict.

“It’s not about to be a blow up tomorrow, but it elevates the overall probability of crisis, conflict or even war with the Americans over Taiwan,” said Kevin Rudd, the former Australian prime minister who previously worked as a diplomat in Beijing.

Taiwan has never been ruled by the Communist Party, but Beijing maintains that it is historically and legally part of Chinese territory. The Chinese Nationalist forces who fled to Taiwan in 1949 after losing the civil war also long asserted that the island was part of a greater China they had ruled.

But since Taiwan emerged as a democracy in the 1990s, growing numbers of its people see themselves as vastly different in values and culture from the People’s Republic of China. That political skepticism toward authoritarian China has persisted, and even deepened, as Taiwan’s economic ties to the mainland expanded.

“The attractiveness of the carrots in China’s Taiwan policy — economic inducements — has now fallen to its lowest point since the end of the Cold War,” said Wu Jieh-min, a political scientist at Academia Sinica, Taiwan’s top research academy.

“The card it holds presently is to raise military threats toward Taiwan step by step, and to continue military preparations for the use of force,” he said, “until one day, a full-scale military offensive on Taiwan becomes a favorable option.”

Since the late 1970s, Deng Xiaoping and other Chinese leaders have tried to coax Taiwan into accepting unification under a “one country, two systems” framework that promised autonomy in laws, religion, economic policy and other areas as long as the island accepted Chinese sovereignty.

But in increasingly democratic Taiwan, few see themselves as proud, future Chinese citizens. Support for Beijing’s proposals sank even lower after 2020, when China imposed a crackdown on Hong Kong, eroding the freedoms that the former British colony was promised under its own version of the framework.

Mr. Xi has continued to promise Taiwan a “one country, two systems” deal, and he may return to offering Taiwan economic and political incentives, if he can influence the island’s presidential election in early 2024.

Taiwan’s current president, Tsai Ing-wen, must step down after her second term ends that year. And a potential successor from her Democratic Progressive Party, which rejects the “one China” principle and favors independence, may be more pugnacious toward Beijing.

In the years after that election, China's leaders likely "want to show some substantive jumps forward on Taiwan, not necessarily unification, but some results there," said Wang Hsin-hsien, a professor at the National Chengchi University in Taipei who studies Chinese politics. "Xi Jinping is the kind of man who repays enmity with vengeance and repays kindness, but when he takes vengeance it is repaid in double."

One puzzle that hangs over Taiwan is whether Mr. Xi has a timetable in mind. He has suggested his vision of China's "rejuvenation" into a prosperous, powerful and complete global power depends on unification with Taiwan. The rejuvenation, he has said, will be achieved by midcentury, so some see that time as the outer limit for his Taiwan ambitions.

"We now have a 27-year fuse that can either be slow-burn or fast-burn," said Mr. Rudd, the former Australian prime minister who is now president of the Asia Society, citing that midcentury date. "The time to worry is the early 2030s, because you're closer in the countdown zone to 2049, but you're also in [Xi Jinping's political lifetime](#)."

In an agenda-setting [speech on Taiwan policy in 2019](#), Mr. Xi reasserted that China hoped to unify with Taiwan peacefully, but would not rule out armed force.

He also called for exploring ways to update what a "one country, two systems" arrangement for Taiwan would look like, and the Chinese government assigned scholars to the project. Such plans, Mr. Xi said, "must fully consider the realities of Taiwan, and also be conducive to lasting order and stability in Taiwan after unification."

"I still believe that the military capacity is first and foremost calibrated at present as a deterrent," said [William Klein](#), a former U.S. diplomat posted in Beijing who now works for FGS Global, a consulting firm, referring to China's buildup. "Their strategy is to narrow the possible universe of outcomes to the point that their preferred outcome becomes a reality."

But the proposals that Chinese scholars have put forward on Taiwan highlight the gulf between what Beijing seems to have in mind, and what most Taiwanese could accept.

The Chinese studies propose sending Chinese officials to maintain control in Taiwan, especially if Beijing wins control by force; others say that China must impose a national security law on Taiwan — like the one it imposed on Hong Kong in 2020 — to punish opponents of Chinese rule.

"It must be recognized that governing Taiwan will be far more difficult than Hong Kong, whether in terms of geographic extent or the political conditions," Zhou Yezhong, a prominent law professor at Wuhan University wrote in a recent "[Outline for China's Unification](#)," which he co-wrote with another academic.

Taiwanese society, they wrote, must be "re-Sinified" to embrace official Chinese values and to "fundamentally transform the political environment that has been long shaped by 'Taiwanese independence' ideas."

China's ambassador to France, Lu Shaye, said in a television interview last week that Taiwan's people had been brainwashed by pro-independence ideas.

"I'm sure that as long as they are re-educated, the Taiwanese public will once again become patriots," he said in the interview [shared on his embassy's website](#). "Not under threat, but through re-education."

Polls of Taiwanese people show that very few have an appetite for unification on China's terms. In the latest opinion survey from National Chengchi University, 1.3 percent of respondents favored unification as soon as possible, 5.1 percent wanted independence as soon as possible. The rest mostly wanted some version of the ambiguous status quo.

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| | <p>“I cherish our freedom of speech and don’t want to be unified by China,” said Huang Chiu-hong, 47, the owner of a shop that sells fried sticks of braided dough, a local snack, on Liuqiu, the Taiwanese island. She said she tried to see the People’s Liberation Army in action out of curiosity, but glimpsed nothing at a pavilion overlooking the sea.</p> <p>“It seems that some people are concerned,” she said. “For me, it’s just a small episode in the ordinary life of Taiwanese.”</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/07 More grain ships leave Ukraine ports |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/07/world/europe/grain-ships-ukraine-ports.html |
| GIST | <p>The biggest caravan of ships carrying grain and other corn products since the beginning of the Russian invasion has sailed from Ukrainian ports on Sunday, heading to Europe, Asia and the Middle East through the mined waters of the Black Sea.</p> <p>According to the United Nations, the four ships leaving what was one of the world’s breadbaskets carried more than 160,000 metric tons — about 176,000 U.S. tons — of agricultural products.</p> <p>Ismeni Palla, a spokeswoman for the United Nations, said that the ships were carrying 6,000 metric tons of sunflower oil to Italy, 45,000 metric tons of meal to China, 66,000 metric tons of sunflower oil to Iran, and 44,000 metric tons of corn to the Turkish city of Iskenderun.</p> <p>She said all the ships would be anchored north of Istanbul and would be inspected by the Joint Coordination Center, an office where senior representatives from Ukraine, Russia, Turkey and the United Nations work together to enable the safe transportation of grain, food and fertilizers.</p> <p>According to the Turkish Ministry of Defense, one ship departed from Odesa and three from the Ukrainian port of Chornomorsk. One empty ship also entered Ukrainian territorial waters on Saturday, the first vessel to arrive in Ukraine for loading, Oleksandr Kubrakov, Ukraine’s infrastructure minister, said in a tweet.</p> <p>The operation was part of a deal struck in late July to enable more than 20 million tons of Ukrainian products to leave the embattled country to be distributed around the world, generating revenue for Ukraine and helping stem a looming global hunger crisis.</p> <p>Four other ships have already left this week carrying more than 80,000 metric tons of products to be delivered to Britain, Ireland and Turkey and Lebanon. On Sunday the Ukrainian Embassy in Lebanon, where the first boat, the Razoni, was expected to arrive, told Reuters that the ship was being delayed.</p> <p>Mr. Kubrakov said that the government was gradually moving on to enable ports to handle larger volumes of work, aiming for at least 100 vessels a month in the near future.</p> <p>Experts have said that the issues affecting food markets are far from being solved, with a food crisis that has already grown to such proportions that no single intervention can solve it.</p> <p>Still, the United Nations secretary general, António Guterres, said delivering Ukrainian stores of grain was a “humanitarian imperative” that he hoped would “bring much-needed stability and relief to global food security.”</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Troubles of Kenya’s China-funded train |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/07/world/africa/kenya-election-train.html |
| GIST | <p>MOMBASA, Kenya — Fireworks popped and confetti rained down in the seaside city of Mombasa when Kenya’s president inaugurated the country’s new railway — designed, funded and built by China.</p> |

President Uhuru Kenyatta proclaimed that the new train would connect the port in Mombasa to the neighboring country of Uganda, create jobs and help transform Kenya into an industrialized, middle-income nation.

“This is a very historic moment,” President Kenyatta, waving a giant Kenyan flag, told the gathering of Kenyan and Chinese officials. “We should be proud.”

That was five years ago. The railway has since turned into a fiasco, the target of lawsuits, criminal investigations over corruption and resentment by environmentalists and displaced workers in the trucking industry.

Now, it’s a hot-button issue in the closely-contested Aug. 9 election and part of a broader debate about China’s expanding role in Kenya. The leading candidates have proposed everything from deporting Chinese workers [doing local jobs](#) to renegotiating the onerous debt Kenya owes China. But for many, it’s the railway, which cost a whopping \$4.7 billion, that has come to embody the corruption and greed among the political elite.

China initially financed the railway as part of its trillion-dollar [Belt and Road Initiative](#), which aimed to expand China’s economic and political clout by funding new ports, roads and railways globally. But China balked at financing the last section of the Kenyan railway — the connection to Uganda— as some African countries struggled to repay their debts.

The train’s tracks run 367 miles from Mombasa through the capital of Nairobi — and end abruptly in an empty field in the Rift Valley, more than 200 miles from Uganda.

“The S.G.R. is an economic, social and fiscal disrupter,” said Tony Watima, an economist, referring to the Standard Gauge Railway, which Kenyans call the train. “The disruption it has created in the Kenyan economy will be felt for years.”

Both leading candidates in the campaign to pick President Kenyatta’s successor — William Ruto and Raila Odinga — have seized on the railway’s troubles, promising to reassess its operations, while also trying to distance themselves from the project.

Mr. Ruto is the vice-president and part of the administration that launched the railway. In an interview, he acknowledged that Kenya’s public debt — a total of \$73.5 billion as of March in a country with a gross domestic product of just over \$100 billion — was creating a “very precarious” situation, and that the railway had so far failed to grow the economy.

“We are hurting from paying the Chinese debt,” he said.

His opponent, Mr. Odinga, is a former prime minister who had long been critical of the project and [accused Mr. Kenyatta’s family of benefiting from it](#). But now that President Kenyatta is backing him, Mr. Odinga has softened his criticism, while promising to overhaul the railroad’s operation. He told a crowd of supporters in Mombasa recently, “Once I am in office, we will fix it.”

The railway represents the height of the borrowing and [looting spree](#) that has plagued Mr. Kenyatta’s government since it took office in 2013, economists, analysts and government officials said in interviews. His administration, they said, has saddled the country with [large-scale infrastructure projects](#) that are not financially viable, largely benefit the wealthy and divert investments from education and health care. In the past nine years, Kenya’s public debt has surged almost fivefold.

“The standard gauge railway is the jewel in the crown of corruption in Kenya,” John Githongo, a former anti-corruption czar, said. “That’s a sad legacy of the current regime.”

Mr. Kenyatta's office did not respond to emailed questions for this article. The government's minister for treasury and planning, Ukur Yatani, who oversees the country's port, rail and pipeline infrastructure, did not reply to requests for an interview.

The railway's financier, Exim Bank of China, has demanded reimbursements, even as creditors like France and Japan gave Kenya some respite from servicing their loans because of the pandemic. To repay the loan, the government introduced a raft of taxes and austerity measures that have angered the public, which is coping with [rising food and fuel prices](#) stemming from a drought and the war in Ukraine.

There was a "lack of economic planning and foresight" in commissioning the railway, said Abdullswamad Shariff Nassir, a lawmaker who chairs the public investments committee in Parliament.

The 'Lunatic Express'

For years, Kenya deliberated whether to build a new railway or renovate its century-old line built by the British colonialists and famously known as the "[Lunatic Express](#)."

Independent reports, including from the World Bank, recommended [upgrading the existing rail network](#) as a cheaper option. But ultimately, the Kenyatta administration settled on building a new one: a standard-gauge railway on which freight trains could run at 50 miles per hour and passenger trains at 74 miles per hour.

Kenya turned to China, which was then prompting its state-owned firms to find investment opportunities in [Africa and other parts of the world](#).

Groundbreaking started in 2013. But trouble dogged the project from the start.

Even though it was financed by taxpayers, there was no competitive bidding for the project — a move Mr. Kenyatta [defended](#).

[Environmentalists questioned](#) why the government routed the railway through Nairobi National Park, one of few wildlife parks anywhere adjacent to a capital city.

The project's only known feasibility study was done by the Chinese contractor — not the government — which presented a conflict of interest, said Okiya Omtatah, a prominent lawyer who challenged the project in court.

He said he was invited to a Nairobi hotel to meet with several Kenyan senators and Chinese managers who asked him to withdraw the case in return for a \$300,000 payout. When he declined, one of the senators offered up to \$1 million, he said. He was told that if he refused, they could pay off a judge to decide the case in their favor.

"You keep your money and I will keep my country," Mr. Omtatah recalled telling them as he left the room.

A communications officer with C.R.B.C., the Chinese contractor, did not respond to emailed questions. Mr. Omtatah would not identify the senators he said he met with.

The court of appeal finally ruled in Mr. Omtatah's favor, in 2020, declaring the railway's contract [illegal for flouting Kenya's procurement laws](#). The government is appealing the decision to the Supreme Court.

Mr. Ruto has promised, if elected president to [publish the contract](#) — a move that activists hope would allow the public to scrutinize it. A transport ministry official this year said that making the contract public would undermine national security because it would reveal its [nondisclosure clauses](#).

Over the years, activists and opposition figures have accused senior politicians of [inflating costs and profiting](#) from the railway.

Land acquisitions became a flashpoint too, with more than a dozen officials, including the former managing director of Kenya Railways and the former chairman of the agency that manages Kenya's public land, [charged in court](#) in 2018, accused of facilitating more than \$2 million in payments to [individuals and companies](#) that falsely claimed to own land along the railway. While some cases have been dropped, trials of other defendants are continuing. Parliament disclosed that millions more were disbursed in [overpayments or payments made without clear documentation](#).

Road versus rail

A year after the train started operating, a parliamentary report showed it cost more than double the amount to transport goods on the train than on the road.

To make the railway profitable, authorities compelled importers to send cargo by railway instead of by road — a decision that sparked protests and [court cases](#).

Officials in Mombasa said the railway cost their county tens of millions of dollars in annual revenues. One [report estimated](#) conservatively that over 8,100 people employed in the trucking, fuel and freight businesses in the county would lose their jobs.

Lawrence Boy, a truck driver in Miritini, a suburb of Mombasa, accused the government of “demonizing” truck drivers and leaving many young people jobless and turning to crime.

“We are citizens of this country,” he said, “and we deserve equal rights.”

A ‘serious mess’

At the Nairobi station, passengers board train cars painted with the slogan, “Connecting Nations. Prospering People.” But a poll taken in 2019-2020 by Afrobarometer found that [87 percent of Kenyans](#) believed their government had borrowed too much money from China.

Lawmakers have recommended the government renegotiate the railway's loan with China. But even if they can, said Mr. Watima, the economist, the railway will remain a “serious mess.”

China, also, is reassessing its early lending spree on African infrastructure projects as it faces growing backlash for doling out loans to poor countries with shaky finances.

Even though China will remain the biggest financier of African infrastructure, Eric Olander, co-founder of the China Global South Project, said it's unlikely that risky, mega projects like the Kenyan railway will receive funding in the future.

“The sand in the hourglass has run out,” he said.

For now, the railway leaves Mombasa, cuts across Kenya's iconic national parks, barrels past Nairobi, before its tracks stop at a quiet hamlet near the town of Duka Moja, surrounded by dense bush and maize plants.

“They said this train was progress, but whose progress is it?” said Daniel Tipape, a motorcycle taxi driver, passing the dirt road near the rail's finish line.

“Sometimes we just build things for the sake of it,” he said.

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| HEADLINE | 08/06 Seattle-area monkeypox vaccine rollout |
| SOURCE | https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/seattle-area-health-officials-roll-out-scarce-vaccines-to-slow-monkeypox-spread/ |

GIST

At Seattle Central College on Capitol Hill, a line of more than 200 people snaked Saturday afternoon from the entrance on Broadway and wrapped around the block down Pine Street, all waiting their turn to get vaccinated against the spreading monkeypox virus.

About 300 had already been vaccinated earlier in the day and Dr. Mark Del Beccaro with Public Health – Seattle & King County said the goal was to keep going “till we run out of vaccines.”

The vaccines used for monkeypox — a form of smallpox vaccine — are scarce and only around 570 doses were available. Only those deemed to be at high risk of contracting the virus were allowed to get the shots.

“It’s a relatively new outbreak,” Del Beccaro said. “So the amount of vaccine that’s in the pipeline is not sufficient and it takes awhile to manufacture the amount of vaccine needed.”

He said federal authorities are saying the vaccine supply will “incrementally get better, but it may take several months before it’s significantly better.”

In the meantime, the focus is vaccinating those at highest risk of infection.

The virus is transmitted via intimate contact and the majority of those infected so far have been men who have sex with men, or the partners of such men. Del Beccaro said men in monogamous relationships are not at high risk.

Another vulnerable group are people who inject drugs, especially those who share needles, he said.

The disease causes small skin lesions and may have other health impacts — including breathing or digestive problems — that vary greatly from one person to another depending on how severe the infection and the strength of the person’s immune system, Del Becarro said.

Few sufferers require hospitalization, he said.

For now, vaccination is not recommended for the general public, who are not deemed at high risk.

However, Del Becarro cautioned a possibility remains of eventual wider spread among the general population. He said if the small lesions caused by the virus are open, the disease could be transmitted by skin-to-skin contact that is not intimate sexual behavior.

“It’s too early to know whether that’s going to be a rare event or whether it could become more common,” he said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has confirmed over 7,500 cases as of Friday in the U.S. The White House has declared monkeypox a public health emergency.

King County as of Friday had 152 confirmed cases, a 52% increase from a week earlier. That jump suggests spread, but also may be due to increased awareness and testing.

Only two or three people have been hospitalized with monkeypox in King County, and none are still in hospital, said Public Health spokesperson Sharon Bogan.

The federal government has so far allocated 9,160 monkeypox vaccine doses to King County, including 4,440 that arrived Friday.

Previous batches have already been distributed to various health care providers and clinics that work with high-risk populations, including the nearly 600 doses at the Seattle Central event.

Ben Meana, operations manager for the community vaccine event, said it was organized after outreach to local community groups including Entre Hermanos, POCAAN and Gay City.

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| | <p>The public health authorities also reached out on social media networks used by men who have sex with men, including Grindr, Scruff and Sniffies, and to the local bathhouses and other public sex venues.</p> <p>Despite the relative mildness of monkeypox compared to AIDS, Meana said the specter of the AIDS epidemic, which was not aggressively addressed early enough and killed many gay men in the 1980s and '90s, looms in the minds of that community as monkeypox spreads.</p> <p>“That is the trauma and the anxiety that the community has,” Meana said. Yet he added that Saturday’s event and the broad outreach to LGBTQ+ organizations has convinced people that this time around “public health is with the community.”</p> <p>Del Becarro said it’s unlikely monkeypox can be stopped. Instead, the hope is to constrain the spread so the number of people getting it each week starts to decline.</p> <p>“I don’t think it would be eradicated,” he said. “There are very few viral diseases that have ever been eradicated.”</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/05 Federal pay lags 22.5% from private sector |
| SOURCE | https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/08/05/federal-salaries-pay-gap-private-sector/ |
| GIST | <p>Federal employees’ salaries lag their private-sector counterparts in comparable jobs by 22.47 percent on average, an advisory group said in a Friday report that noted the “pay gap” has held steady over the last two years.</p> <p>The findings by the Federal Salary Council highlight the need for President Biden's proposed 4.6 percent raise for federal employees, unions said.</p> <p>“With the latest inflation figures, rising private sector wages and the new pay gap calculation, it is even more clear that federal employees need help keeping up with rising costs and the government needs help in recruiting and retaining skilled employees,” National Treasury Employees Union President Tony Reardon said in a statement.</p> <p>The last time the federal pay gap was computed, in late 2020, the council reported a 23.1 percent gap.</p> <p>The council calculates pay differences on a national average and by some four dozen city areas using Labor Department statistics on costs of labor — not costs of living — under a formula set by a federal pay law.</p> <p>Assessments using other data sets and methods have reached much different conclusions, though. Some conservative and libertarian organizations have concluded that federal employees make more than private sector workers, while the Congressional Budget Office in 2017 found federal employees to be slightly ahead on average but behind among those with higher levels of education.</p> <p>Biden’s recommended pay boost would be the largest for the 2.1 million executive branch workers in two decades. Under the pay law, if Congress does not enact a figure by the end of the year, that recommendation takes effect automatically.</p> <p>That seems likely to occur, with the House recently passing a spending bill for 2023 making no mention of a raise. A comparable bill in the Senate also is silent. Employee organizations and some Democrats in Congress continue to push for 5.1 percent, however.</p> <p>In most years, the raise figure becomes an average, with part paid across the board and the remainder paid in amounts that differ depending on where employees work. The council this year calculated that employees working in the Washington-Baltimore area would be in line for one of the larger boosts.</p> |

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| | <p>The salary council projected that 0.5 percentage point of the 2023 raise would be devoted to location-based pay, although that, too, would be up to Biden to decide if Congress leaves matters in his hands.</p> <p>By city zone, the largest increases in 2023 would be paid to employees working in the San Francisco-Oakland, Los Angeles, New York, Seattle-Tacoma, San Diego and Washington-Baltimore areas. The smallest would be paid to those working in the catchall locality outside the designated city areas, called the “rest of the U.S.”</p> <p>At its meeting Friday, the council also recommended creating new localities in the Fresno, Calif., Spokane, Wash., Reno, Nev., and Rochester, N.Y., areas and expanding the boundaries of a number of existing localities. That would boost the salaries of some 33,000 employees by moving them out of the catchall locality.</p> <p>The council’s recommendations now go to a higher-level group called the President’s Pay Agent made up of the heads of the Labor Department, Office of Management and Budget and Office of Personnel Management. That group in turn reports to the White House, with final action on a raise typically taken in a late-year presidential order.</p> <p>The American Federation of Government Employees called on that group to accept those recommendations, saying they would “put additional money into the hands of federal employees whose pay lags behind their coworkers.”</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/06 Death Valley flash flood strands about 1,000 |
| SOURCE | https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/08/06/death-valley-record-flooding/ |
| GIST | <p>Death Valley National Park was closed Saturday after exceptional amounts of rain drenched the park on Friday, triggering flash floods that left about 1,000 visitors and park staff stranded.</p> <p>The park received 1.46 inches of rainfall at the Furnace Creek area — just shy of the previous calendar day record of 1.47 inches, set on April 15, 1988. This amounts to about three-quarters of what the area typically receives in an average year, 1.94 inches, and is the greatest amount ever recorded in August. The lowest, driest and hottest location in the United States, Death Valley averages just 0.11 inches of rain in August.</p> <p>As of Saturday morning, “everything is going well,” said Nikki Jones, a server assistant at a restaurant in the park’s Ranch Inn, who also lives there and posted a video of the flooding from her colleague on Twitter. Jones told The Washington Post that the floodwaters receded Friday afternoon, but light debris remain on the roads.</p> <p>“CalTrans has done an amazing job to get it cleaned up as soon as possible,” she told The Post in a Twitter message. “I drove on the roads today.”</p> <p>Jones said some people are stranded at the Inn at the Oasis because of trapped cars, “but people are able to get out of the park today.”</p> <p>“The floodwaters pushed dumpster containers into parked cars, which caused cars to collide into one another,” the National Park Service said in a statement Friday. “Additionally, many facilities are flooded including hotel rooms and business offices.</p> <p>The NPS did not immediately respond to The Washington Post’s request for an update Saturday morning.</p> <p>The torrent was triggered by the Southwest monsoon, which develops each summer as prevailing winds shift from out of the west to out of the south, drawing a surge of humidity northward. This moisture can fuel vigorous downpours that douse the parched desert landscape. Because there is little soil to soak up the</p> |

rains, any measurable rains can cause flooding in low-lying areas, and heavier rains can collect into normally dry creeks, triggering flash floods.

This year's Southwest monsoon has been particularly intense — which has helped relieve drought conditions in the region but also resulted in many significant flood events. Serious flooding has recently affected areas around [Las Vegas](#) and [Phoenix](#).

The Death Valley flood also comes amid a series of extreme rain events over the Lower 48 states. Over the week spanning the end of July and beginning of August, three 1-in-1,000 year rain events occurred — inundating St. Louis, [eastern Kentucky](#), and [southeast Illinois](#). Earlier this summer, [Yellowstone National Park](#) also flooded.

Death Valley holds the record for the highest temperature ever recorded on Earth, as well as several runners-up. Officially, Death Valley reached 134 degrees on July 10, 1913, but some climatologists have [questioned the legitimacy](#) of that reading. The next highest temperature on record, 131 degrees from Kebili, Tunisia, set July 7, 1931, is also controversial. Last summer and the summer before, Death Valley hit 130 degrees, which may be the [highest pair of reliably measured temperatures on Earth](#) if the 1931 Tunisia and 1913 Death Valley readings are disregarded.

The rainfall inundated the park, trapping vehicles in debris, according to a video tweeted by John Sirlin, an Arizona-based stormchaser. He wrote that roads were blocked by boulders and palm trees that had fallen, and that visitors struggled for six hours to leave the park.

[Earlier this week](#), flash floods hit parts of western Nevada, forcing the closure of some roads leading to the park from Las Vegas. Flash floods also hit parts of northern Arizona.

Sirlin told the Associated Press that Friday's rain started around 2 a.m. and was "more extreme than anything I've seen there."

"There were at least two dozen cars that got smashed and stuck in there," he said, adding that he saw washes flowing several feet deep although he did not see anyone injured, and the NPS reported no injuries as of Friday.

Last July, [rare summer rains](#) also soaked Death Valley, bringing 0.74 inches in a day at Furnace Creek approximately two weeks after the park set the world record for the hottest daily average temperature, at 118.1 degrees Fahrenheit.

Scientists say human-caused warming of the climate is intensifying extreme precipitation events. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change found some evidence that rainfall from the Southwest monsoon has increased since the 1970s.

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| HEADLINE | 08/06 China simulates attack on Taiwan |
| SOURCE | https://www.wsj.com/articles/beijing-simulates-attack-on-taiwan-as-chinese-exercises-extend-into-third-day-11659784913?mod=hp_lead_pos8 |
| GIST | <p>A large number of Chinese military aircraft and ships crossed the halfway mark of the Taiwan Strait on Saturday, in a simulated land strike on the self-governing island that Beijing claims as its own.</p> <p>The maneuvers came on the third day of a promised four-day series of military drills by China's military, the People's Liberation Army, following U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taipei earlier this week .</p> <p>Defense analysts said Saturday's exercises build on China's rehearsals in recent days to stage a potential attack on Taiwan, demonstrating and honing Beijing's ability to impose an effective air and sea blockade that would precede an amphibious landing.</p> |

The Communist Party's flagship newspaper, People's Daily, described the maneuvers as "simulated land strikes," while Taiwan's Defense Ministry said its military issued warnings from its defense radar system and deployed air reconnaissance patrols, naval ships and land-based missiles in response to what it also described as a simulated attack on the island. It said it detected 14 ships and 20 planes, 14 of which crossed the halfway mark of the Taiwan Strait.

The drills will help the PLA to gain more practical experience in the event of a real attack on Taiwan, said Su Tzu-yun, a Taipei-based security expert with the Institute for National Defense and Security Research, which is backed by Taiwan's military. But Mr. Su also said that the enlarged scope of exercises would strengthen the West's vigilance toward China.

In recent days, the PLA has increased the frequency with which its vessels and aircraft cross the so-called median line, a notional boundary that sits halfway between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan's main island. Beijing doesn't acknowledge the existence of the line.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, speaking in the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh on Saturday, where he met with regional counterparts, defended China's actions around Taiwan as a legitimate response to the U.S.'s actions and said Beijing would "resolutely smash the Taiwan authorities' fantasy of 'relying on the United States to seek independence.'"

"The noose around their necks will only get tighter and tighter," Mr. Wang said, referring to what he called pro-independence forces in Taiwan.

The maneuvers on Saturday follow a PLA [simulation of a military blockade of the island](#) on Friday that Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense said involved 68 Chinese warplanes and 13 warships. The actions prompted [more than 200 commercial vessels](#) to leave Taiwan's surrounding waters, including the Taiwan Strait, a major shipping route in the region.

Maj. Gen. Meng Xiangqing, a professor at National Defense University of the People's Liberation Army, told China's state broadcaster on Friday that the PLA sent missiles directly over Taiwan's main island for the first time, though Taiwan's government said the missiles' paths were so high that they didn't pose risks to the island.

Even so, some in Taiwan took to social media to criticize the military for not disclosing the details before such information was released by Japan. The Taiwanese military said it wanted to "protect its intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance abilities."

In the run-up to Mrs. Pelosi's visit, high-profile Chinese commentators including Hu Xijin, former editor in chief of the state-run tabloid Global Times, had stoked nationalistic fervor and expectation for a swift and forceful response from Beijing.

Beijing had warned that Mrs. Pelosi's trip, if carried out, would trigger unspecified countermeasures. Mrs. Pelosi had also been warned in briefings with senior White House and Pentagon officials about the lasting damage her trip could cause to [U.S.-China relations](#), though she was never asked to skip the trip, according to a U.S. official with knowledge of the discussions.

Many on [Chinese social media](#) expressed disappointment in what they considered meek countermeasures after Mrs. Pelosi's departure, turning their ire toward Mr. Hu for misleading the public with false predictions.

In an apparent nod to public sentiment, Chinese state media has played up the displays of military might during the exercises that followed Mrs. Pelosi's departure. On Saturday morning, the People's Daily touted the PLA's precision strike and blockade capabilities on China's Twitter-like Weibo platform, adding the hashtag: "What China Says, China Will Do."

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| | <p>“Interfering external forces and ‘Taiwan independence’ separatist forces will now have a deeper appreciation of what is meant by countermeasures,” the People’s Daily wrote in its post, garnering more than 200,000 likes. Similar posts during the military drills have dominated Weibo.</p> <p>Separately on Saturday, Ouyang Li-hsin vice president of Taiwan’s National Chung-Shan Institute of Science and Technology, a military-backed research body that develops and manufactures defense technology, was found dead in his hotel room in southern Taiwan, the institute said. The hospital determined after a forensic examination that the 57-year-old Mr. Ouyang had died of a heart attack.</p> <p>Police said there was no evidence of foul play and said it had no plans to investigate further. As part of his duties, Mr. Ouyang oversaw the production of missiles, a key element of Taiwan’s defenses against any military assault by Beijing.</p> <p>On Saturday, Politico reported that PLA officials haven’t returned calls from their Pentagon counterparts, citing unnamed sources. Hawaii-based spokespeople for U.S. Indo-Pacific Command didn’t respond to requests for comment.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/05 After mild start, wildfire season in full swing |
| SOURCE | https://mynorthwest.com/3586922/wildfire-season-underway-2022/ |
| GIST | <p>Thanks to the cool, wet spring and early summer, the wildfire season may have been mild up until now ... but all of that changed this week.</p> <p>With the Vantage Highway Fire, the Cow Canyon Fire north of Naches, the Williams Lake Fire south of Cheney, the Riparia Fire near the Snake River in Whitman County, and the Lind Fire – which destroyed six homes and eight other buildings on Thursday — all breaking out this week, fire season appears to be underway in Washington. No people have been hurt in the fires at this point.</p> <p>“We’ve been blessed to have a light fire season, but we need to be very aware that our fire season is now upon us,” said Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz at a briefing on Friday. “And with the hotter, drier conditions and windy conditions, fires can erupt very quickly ... It is going to likely get worse before it gets better.”</p> <p>While all of the rain in May and June did delay the fire season, it also helped plants to grow — and those plants are now acting as tinder for the fires.</p> <p>“That moisture, those grey skies, those cooler temperatures really helped. But what we do know is that all that moisture allowed all of those grasses to grow,” Franz said. “And now they will quickly dry out with the hot temperatures.”</p> <p>Combined with the hot, dry air, strong winds in Central and Eastern Washington have also encouraged dramatic fire growth.</p> <p>“Those windy conditions have led to extreme fire behavior, making suppression very challenging as the fires shift direction rapidly and unpredictably,” Franz said.</p> <p>The good news is, going into the weekend, officials at the Department of Natural Resources believe winds will die down east of the Cascades. However, they are worried about the potential thunderstorms on the horizon for Eastern Washington next week, as those storms could bring lightning strikes and more wind gusts.</p> <p>“The hopes right now are that the thunderstorms that do develop will produce precipitation across the east side of the state and in the high Cascades,” said Matt Dehr, a wildland fire meteorologist with DNR.</p> |

Franz said we cannot let our guard down just because wildfire season has been light up until now. She pointed to the 2020 season, which also seemed relatively tame at first due to a cooler start to summer. Then over Labor Day Weekend, [dozens of fires started](#) across the state, conflagrating more than 500 square miles. A toddler [died in a wildfire](#) in Okanogan County, and [nearly the entire town of Malden](#) in Whitman County burned to the ground.

“We cannot forget 2020. While we had a light season in the spring and early summer of 2020, we all tragically remember the Labor Day firestorm, where just in 72 hours, we lost a significant amount of structures and a little boy’s life,” Franz said.

Franz begged Washington residents [to take precautions](#) so that 2022 does not resemble 2020. Homeowners should always follow burn ban laws and keep a hose nearby whenever doing any recreational burning. When camping, remember to always fully put out your campfire. Never drive, park, or use power tools over dry grass. When hauling a boat or trailer, keep chains off of the road.

“Be part of making sure that this year is our safest, most-reduced fire season ever,” Franz encouraged residents.

In the meantime, the state says it has plenty of people to fight the fires — and even some to spare to help out other states in need.

“We are currently fully-staffed ... we’ve actually been sharing our resources across jurisdictions, helping in other states’ fires,” Franz said.

Since last year’s fire season, the vaccine mandate for state workers went into effect. But Russ Lane, assistant manager of DNR’s Wildfire Division, said the mandate has not created a gap in firefighters. In fact, at nearly 700 firefighters, the state has about 3% more firefighters than it did in 2021.

“DNR is actually up slightly in numbers ... we actually have a handful more firefighters on the ground than we did compared to last year, which is a really nice place to be,” Lane said.

Franz noted that the vaccine mandate is waived for contracted firefighters from other states “in order to mirror the federal government.”

If things get worse this year, Washington could bring in firefighters from Canada and the National Guard, but so far, wildfire season has not been that dire.

In all, what makes the biggest difference, Franz said, is that firefighters are not as tired this year as last year. At this point in the year, the state has had about 300 fires — last year, we had more than 200 just in April, and ended wildfire season with nearly 1,900 fires.

“We’re sitting in a very good place, given that our resources have not been stretched thin, our firefighters are not exhausted and drained like they were last year,” Franz said. “They’re ready to get on these fires quickly, and they’re showing it,”

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You can see a map of active wildfires on [DNR’s website](#).

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| HEADLINE | 08/05 Deadly protests against UN peacekeepers |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/aug/05/death-toll-reaches-36-in-eastern-drc-as-protesters-turn-on-un-peacekeepers |
| GIST | <p>Fears of a new wave of violence in the restive east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are growing after weeks of deadly protests against UN peacekeepers and rising regional tensions.</p> <p>Thirty-six people, including four UN peacekeepers, have died in the past two weeks as hundreds of protesters vandalised and set fire to UN buildings in several cities in eastern frontier provinces.</p> |

Though there have been similar waves of protests before, few have caused so many casualties. With elections due next year, analysts say political actors are fuelling unrest.

Last week, the DRC effectively expelled a spokesperson for Monusco, the UN's peacekeeping force in the country, after allegedly making "indelicate and inappropriate" statements that authorities said contributed to the tensions with the local population. Authorities said this week they wanted to reassess the peacekeeping mission's withdrawal plan.

Civilians in eastern DRC have accused Monusco, which has been active for more than a decade, of failing to protect them from the militia violence that has long plagued the region but which has [intensified](#) in recent months. The protesters called for the immediate withdrawal of the force.

Nelleke van de Walle, project director for the Great Lakes region at the International Crisis Group, said Monusco was easy to blame.

"People are actually angry at a failed state, a failed government, an incapable army, but Monusco has a very visible presence with its patrols and bases and so becomes a focus of popular frustrations," she told the Guardian.

In a poll published on Thursday by the Congo Research Group at New York University and the Kinshasa-based institute Ebuteli, 44% of those asked said Monusco should leave DRC immediately – about the same number as those who wanted the mission to stay in 2016.

Monusco is due to hand most of its duties over to local forces by 2024, according to a timetable drawn up last year, but the government now aims to speed up its departure, said the foreign affairs minister, Christophe Lutundula.

The force, which took over from an earlier UN operation in 2010, has been scaling down for years, and its current mandate ends in December. A renewal for a further year by the UN security council was expected to be a formality and is still seen as very likely by analysts.

The peacekeepers have been accused of retaliating with force and, in some cases, live ammunition, as hundreds of protesters threw rocks and petrol bombs, vandalising and setting fire to UN buildings.

A government commission sent to assess the aftermath found that 13 people died in clashes in the city of Goma; another 13, including four peacekeepers, in Butembo; and three in Kanyabayonga, the DRC's presidency said.

Four protesters were killed in the city of Uvira when they were hit by an electric cable that had been damaged as troops fired shots at it.

Three civilians died in a separate incident, reported on Sunday, during which soldiers returning from leave to a UN intervention brigade opened fire at a border post.

About 170 people were wounded, the commission added, noting strong anti-UN sentiment among civil society representatives.

At least some of the protests were organised and encouraged by political actors seeking to mobilise popular opinion against the peacekeepers.

"We are basically in a pre-election period now with polls scheduled for next year. So politicians are using and feeding grievances for their own benefit," Van de Walle said.

Before some of the protests, the Goma youth branch of the ruling UDPS party released a statement demanding Monusco “withdraw from Congolese soil without conditions because it has already proved its incapacity to provide us with protection”.

The president of the DRC senate, Modeste Bahati, told supporters in Goma on 15 July that Monusco should “pack its bags”.

Delphin Rukumbuzi Ntanyoma, an analyst at the Erasmus University Rotterdam, said that in the context, such remarks could be dangerous.

“The UN mission ... has long been blamed for what should be the DRC government’s responsibility: de-escalating violence in the country’s eastern region and finding long-term solutions to peace,” he wrote on the Conversation website last week.

The violence in eastern DRC is driven by competition for rich mineral and other resources. Rival regional powers Rwanda and Uganda have long sought to extend their influence in the region, sometimes through armed proxies. Instability has been aggravated by an offensive launched by an Islamist extremist group, the ADF, and the new campaign by a resurgent faction known as M23, which many Congolese believe is supported by Rwanda.

After lying mostly dormant for years, the group resumed fighting in November and made significant advances, capturing the North Kivu town of Bunagana on the Ugandan border.

On Thursday, a UN group of experts said it had “solid evidence” that Rwandan troops had conducted military operations in eastern DRC since late last year and that Kigali has supported the M23 rebel group’s advance there.

The faction’s re-emergence is a significant factor in the anger directed at UN peacekeepers, whose commanders have admitted they lack the resources to take on the rebels.

“They said they don’t have the strength to fight the M23. Now what are they still doing here?” said Shadrac Kambale, a motorbike-taxi driver in Goma.

Sankara Bin, another protester, said: “We don’t want to see Monusco walking in the streets of Goma, we don’t even want to see their planes flying over.”

The UN first deployed an observer mission to eastern Congo in 1999. It became the peacekeeping mission Monusco – the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo – in 2010, with a mandate to conduct offensive operations.

It has a current strength of about 16,300 uniformed personnel, the world’s largest UN mission, and has sustained 230 fatalities.

A spokesperson for the peacekeeping force said last week the mission would redouble its efforts to work alongside the people and authorities of DRC to fulfil its mandate from the UN security council.

Analysts say it is unlikely that the peacekeepers will be forced into a sudden departure. They will be needed to provide logistical support for elections in 2023, while many politicians recognise their contribution to stability.

“It would not be in the interests of [President Felix] Tshisekedi and many others to see Monusco leave,” said Van de Walle.

The new poll found that security was the biggest concern in DRC, with 26% of respondents putting it first, ahead of infrastructure and jobs.

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| | International powers are now paying more attention to the country. In an effort to counter the efforts of strategic competitors on the continent, such as Russia and China, the US secretary of state will travel next month to South Africa, DRC and Rwanda, the state department announced last week. |
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| HEADLINE | 08/05 Wildfire-fueled fire-breathing dragon clouds |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/05/pyrocumulonimbus-clouds-wildfire-mckinney-fire |
| GIST | <p>Nasa calls them the “fire-breathing dragon of clouds”.</p> <p>Aerial images of the McKinney fire taken this week captured an increasingly common phenomenon: a nearly 50,000ft plume known as a pyrocumulonimbus.</p> <p>The fire, which is raging nearly uncontained in California’s Klamath national forest, is just the latest this year to produce the clouds. They are akin to fire-triggered thunderstorms, explained Derek Mallia, a researcher at the University of Utah who recently co-authored a paper showing how smoke plumes are getting taller, and they are of deep concern to firefighters.</p> <p>Typically, thunderstorms are initiated by large-scale storm systems like a low pressure zone or a cold front. But if a fire is large enough and there is enough moisture in the atmosphere, it can create its own thunderstorm where smoke mixes with the resulting thunderstorm cloud. “Essentially, the fire is creating its own weather,” Mallia said.</p> <p>Pyrocumulonimbus clouds are feared for several reasons. When they form above fires, the clouds can make the blaze below spread even faster. Sometimes they can also create their own lightning, which can spark more fires. Fire-triggered clouds tend to be drier and produce less rain, Mallia explained. “This can be problematic as pyrocumulonimbus clouds can produce a lot of wind, which can result in unpredictable fire behavior underneath the cloud and even cause new fires from lightning strikes.” That’s what happened in British Columbia during the summer of 2021, when one fire generated 700,000 flashes of lightning, as many as the province typically gets in one year.</p> <p>They also can cause fires to move in erratic ways, because they create a vacuum between the cloud and the ground. The hotter a wildfire burns, the more rising air it produces, said David Peterson, a meteorologist at the US Naval Research Laboratory, during a virtual press conference in 2021. “These are pushing smoke upward at extreme velocities, such that they’re injecting smoke at altitudes above the cruising altitude of jet aircraft,” said Peterson. “So we’re talking 50, 60,000 feet, potentially.”</p> <p>Pyrocumulonimbus clouds are becoming more common and are throwing more pollutants into the upper atmosphere. As fires become larger, with more dry fuels, they produce more heat and smoke, Mallia said.</p> <p>In some cases, the tall plumes and fire convection can boost aerosols into the stratosphere, like a moderate volcanic eruption – pushing particles into the jet stream that can affect air quality at continental scales. That’s what happened when smoke from fires on the west coast was pushed all the way to New York City. Sometimes the clouds can be so thick that they blot out the sun.</p> <p>In 2019, Nasa researchers flew a plane through a fire cloud to understand the chemistry of smoke to better understand its impact on air quality and climate.</p> <p>Scientists are still learning about the fire-triggered storms. Mallia and his colleagues hope to develop ways to predict when pyrocumulonimbus clouds will appear, to help fire managers and firefighters.</p> <p>And they want to know how the clouds could cause more warming in the atmosphere. Smoke lofted into the lower stratosphere could affect the climate, Mallia said. Smoke particles contain a lot of black carbon, which can result in warming when exposed to sunlight at high altitudes.</p> |

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| | “It’s possible that if we see more smoke being injected into the stratosphere, this could result in further warming of our atmosphere,” he said. “If we see this more frequently, this could result in longer-term warming effects.” |
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| HEADLINE | 08/06 Day 164 of the Russia invasion |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/06/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-164-of-the-invasion |
| GIST | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ukraine has accused Russian forces of strikes near a nuclear reactor at the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia power plant in the country’s south-east. Energoatom, the state-run operator of Ukraine’s nuclear power plants, said in a statement: “Three strikes were recorded on the site of the plant, near one of the power blocks where the nuclear reactor is located.” Russia’s defence ministry accused Ukrainian forces of shelling the plant, saying a leak of radiation had been avoided only by luck. • Vladimir Putin has met Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for talks that were expected to focus on Russia’s war in Ukraine and that are being rumoured to include Kremlin efforts to circumvent western sanctions. The Russian president welcomed Erdoğan to Sochi, a resort city on the Black Sea, by thanking the Turkish president for help in securing an international deal that resumed grain exports from Ukraine that had been disrupted by the Kremlin war machine – as well as Russian foodstuffs and fertilisers – to world markets. They agreed to boost cooperation in the transport, agriculture, finance and construction industries, they said in a joint statement after a four-hour meeting. • Three ships carrying almost 60,000 tonnes of grain between them have departed Ukrainian Black Sea ports and are on their way to Britain, Ireland and Turkey respectively. Oleksandr Kubrakov, Ukraine’s infrastructure minister, said he planned “to ensure ports have the ability to handle more than 100 vessels per month”. • Russia says it is ready to talk about a prisoner swap with the US following Thursday’s nine-year jail sentence for US basketball player Brittney Griner. However, the Kremlin said any such negotiations should not be played out publicly. • Amnesty International has said it stands by its accusation that Ukraine is endangering civilians by creating army bases in residential areas to counter Russian forces, after a report from the rights group prompted a furious response from Kyiv. Volodymyr Zelenskiy, the Ukrainian president, criticised Amnesty over the report published on Thursday, saying the rights group was drawing a false equivalence between Ukraine as the victim of aggression and the Russian invaders. • The UK’s Ministry of Defence has raised concerns about the “security and safety” of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, saying Russia has “used artillery units based in these areas to target Ukrainian territory on the western bank of the Dnipro [Dnieper] river”. • A European Union plan to cut gas use and help Germany wean itself off dependency on Russia will come into effect early next week, the bloc’s presidency said on Friday. Last week, EU member states agreed to reduce their use of gas by 15% over the winter, with exceptions for some countries and despite opposition from Hungary. • Canada is sending up to 225 Canadian armed forces to the UK to recommence the training of Ukrainian military recruits, the Canadian defence minister has announced. Since 2015, Canada has trained 33,000 Ukrainian military and security personnel but in February paused aspects of the training. • A US official has accused Moscow of preparing to plant fake evidence to make it look like the recent mass killing of Ukrainian prisoners of war in an attack on a Russian-controlled jail was caused by Ukraine. Kyiv and Moscow have traded blame over last week’s strikes on the prison in Kremlin-controlled Olenivka, in eastern Ukraine. • A leading Russian hypersonics expert has been arrested on suspicion of treason, the state-controlled Tass news agency reported on Friday. Andrei Shpielyuk heads the hypersonics laboratory at the Novosibirsk Institute of Theoretical and Applied Mechanics, according to the institute’s website, and has in recent years coordinated research to support the development of hypersonic missile systems, Reuters reports. |

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| HEADLINE | 08/05 Infant formula shortage drags on |
| SOURCE | https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/aug/5/infant-formula-shortage-drags-on-major-facility-ou/ |
| GIST | <p>Months after the start of an infant formula shortage in the U.S., many parents are still struggling to find cans and bottles of certain brands, in part because a major formula plant has not yet ramped up production.</p> <p>But the Abbott Nutrition formula plant in Sturgis, Michigan, is poised to begin production of its main formula soon, a company CEO said recently, while other producers also plan increases in the U.S. that should ease shortages.</p> <p>For now, however, the missing output from the Sturgis plant has extended a formula shortage that started in February.</p> <p>A spokesperson for Abbott Nutrition told The Washington Times that its Sturgis plant, which the FDA temporarily shuttered in February over safety issues, is not yet producing Similac, the nation's most popular line of formula.</p> <p>The plant has started to produce its specialty line of hypoallergenic formulas, called EleCare, but has not yet shipped those products to stores.</p> <p>"We restarted EleCare production at Sturgis on July 1 and we'll begin shipping imminently," spokesperson John M. Koval said. "We are working to restart Similac production as soon as we can."</p> <p>Abbott closed the facility after a formula recall and while the FDA conducted a multiweek inspection that discovered five strains of <i>Cronobacter sakazakii</i> and other safety concerns.</p> <p>The plant stayed shuttered for months and began the process of reopening in May after reaching an agreement with the FDA. The plant's start-up was slowed by flooding from torrential storms in mid-June.</p> <p>The Abbott closure, coupled with the February recall of Similac products, is one of the main reasons empty store shelves persist, while pandemic-related supply chain issues also have contributed to the shortage.</p> <p>The Sturgis facility accounted for 40% of the U.S. production of Abbott's popular powdered formula prior to the February closure.</p> <p>In Tampa, parents continue to rely on social media to find their next can or bottle of formula, posting the location, time and photos of freshly stocked store shelves.</p> <p>Parents regularly barter online with each other for hard-to-find formula products that include Nutramigen, Enfamil AR, Enfamil Enfacare, Enfamil Sensitive, Similac Advance, Similac 360 and many others, particularly hypoallergenic formulas.</p> <p>"My baby only tolerates Enfamil AR and it's so scarce," Danielle Heerschap of Tampa told The Washington Times.</p> <p>Not all scarce formulas, including Enfamil, are produced by Abbott. But the Abbott closure and supply chain issues have caused shortages of formulas made by the nation's two other main producers, Mead Johnson Nutrition/Reckitt and Nestle USA.</p> <p>Like Abbott Nutrition, they are also working to ramp up overseas shipments and domestic production.</p> <p>A spokesperson for Reckitt, the formula producer owned by Mead Johnson and the maker of Enfamil, said the company is ramping up imports of formula from their facilities overseas to help meet demand and is producing more formula in the U.S. as well.</p> |

“The first shipment of infant formula powder has been finished and packaged at our facility in Wanamingo, Minnesota and has already begun being distributed as Enfamil to store shelves nationwide,” said spokesperson Elissa Dodge.

The shortage of formula has persisted despite significant efforts by the Biden administration to import formula from overseas.

The administration’s “Operation Fly Formula” has completed dozens of flights that have imported more than 55 million 8-ounce bottle equivalents of infant formula, according to administration officials.

Much of that supply has been provided to hospitals and other facilities that require specialty formula to help infants with critical feeding needs. The administration also has shipped in foreign brands of formula from countries including Australia, the United Kingdom and Switzerland.

But American parents continue to hunt for familiar U.S. brands, much of them produced by Abbott Nutrition, and now some are noticing the less-expensive generic brands are selling out.

“Recently generic gentle formula has been non-existent in stores or online,” Rachel Gilmore said.

The shortage could be alleviated in the coming weeks.

While Abbott Nutrition won’t say when Similac will be produced again at the Sturgis plant, Abbott Laboratories CEO Robert Ford told investors on July 20 the plant was “very close” to beginning Similac production.

“I don’t want to necessarily kind of put an exact date here, but we’re not talking months, we’re not talking weeks,” Mr. Ford said.

Mr. Ford said Abbott had appointed a special team “to shorten the time between manufacturer and on-shelf availability.”

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| HEADLINE | 08/06 Israel airstrikes, Gaza militants fire rockets |
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| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/06/world/israel-gaza-fighting-airstrikes#israel-gaza-fighting-airstrikes |
| GIST | <p>Fighting between the Israeli military and Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip stretched into a second day on Saturday in what has become the biggest conflagration in the territory in a year.</p> <p>Israel, which initiated a military operation with a series of airstrikes on Gaza on Friday, targeted what it said were rocket factories and depots belonging to the Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad on Saturday. The militants fired rockets over the Israeli towns closest to Gaza.</p> <p>Local news reports showed images of two residential buildings being flattened by Israeli missile strikes on Saturday.</p> <p>The Israeli military said its helicopters and vessels had targeted what it described as two weapons storage facilities, which it said were located “in the residences of terrorist operatives in the Islamic Jihad terrorist organization in the Gaza Strip.” It was not immediately clear whether they were referring to the same residential buildings.</p> <p>Rockets fired from Gaza hit a house in the Israeli border town of Sderot and another Israeli community near the Gaza border on Saturday, according to the Israeli police and local news media reports. One civilian was lightly injured.</p> |

By midday, sirens warning of incoming rocket fire were sounding farther north in the Israeli port city of Ashdod.

The Palestinian death toll for two days of fighting had risen to 15 by Saturday afternoon with 125 injured, according to the Health Ministry in Gaza. A 5-year-old girl was among those killed on Friday.

Two Israeli soldiers were wounded on Saturday by a mortar shell that fell on an Israeli communal farm near the Gaza border, according to the military.

Most of the projectiles fired into Israeli territory appeared to have either fallen into open areas or been intercepted by the country's Iron Dome air defense system.

No cease-fire appeared imminent, despite early mediation efforts by international actors, including the United Nations. Ismail Haniyeh, the leader of the political bureau of Hamas, the dominant Islamic militant group in Gaza, said that he had spoken overnight with officials from Egypt and Qatar as well as with the United Nations.

The fighting erupted on Friday afternoon when Israel launched airstrikes that it said were an attempt to foil an imminent attack from Gaza by Islamic Jihad after almost a week of rising tensions between Israel and the second-largest militant group in Gaza. Israeli officials have said that they are targeting only Islamic Jihad, after they said that it had been on the verge of firing anti-tank missiles at Israeli targets on Friday afternoon.

Israel arrested one of the group's senior commanders this week in the West Bank, leading to threats of reprisal from its Gaza leadership. One Israeli airstrike on Friday killed Taysir al-Jabari, a senior leader of the armed wing of Islamic Jihad.

The Israeli military also said it had arrested 19 Islamic Jihad operatives in raids overnight across the occupied West Bank.

On Saturday morning, an Israeli military spokesman, Ran Kochav, told Israeli public radio that the fighting would most likely last for at least a week and that no negotiations to end the hostilities were underway.

But overnight, the militants reduced the range of their rocket fire, aiming mostly at areas close to Gaza instead of cities farther to the north, which they initially targeted.

Analysts said that recalibration could prevent the situation from escalating further — as could a decision by Hamas to remain on the sidelines of the fighting.

Islamic Jihad sometimes acts independently of Hamas, which does not always support the smaller group in its rocket wars with Israel.

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| HEADLINE | 08/05 Drought grips France, extreme heat Europe |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/05/world/europe/france-drought-europe-heat.html |
| GIST | <p>PARIS — France declared Friday that it was in the grip of its “most severe” drought, one that has also desiccated large areas of Europe this summer, causing wildfires and imperiling crops as temperature records shatter across the continent.</p> <p>“This drought is the most severe recorded in our country,” Élisabeth Borne, the French prime minister, said in a statement on Friday.</p> <p>Ms. Borne said France had received insufficient rainfall and had been hit in recent weeks by an “accumulation of successive heat waves,” increasing demand for water even as precious reserves</p> |

evaporated in seemingly endless days of sweltering heat. She urged the French to be “very vigilant” about their water usage.

[Water restrictions](#) are already in place in almost all of mainland France, and officials have been on patrol in the past few weeks to ensure that residents and businesses comply.

Over half of France’s regional departments are classified as being in a “crisis” situation that bars people from washing their cars or watering their lawns and prevents farmers from irrigating some crops, frustrating those, like [potato growers](#), who have been forced to let their fields wither.

Drinking water reserves have already dried up in over a hundred municipalities around the country, the authorities said. Gérardmer, a popular resort town in eastern France, announced that it would pump water from its lake for household use for only the fourth time in its history.

“It’s worrying for the future,” Stessy Speissmann, the town’s mayor, [told the BFMTV news channel on Thursday](#), “because if these situations persist this early in the year, and repeat year after year, we are going to have to find other solutions.”

Ms. Borne, the prime minister, did not provide numbers in her announcement, but this week Météo France, the national weather forecaster, said that last month was the driest July recorded in more than 60 years, with just 9.7 millimeters, or about 0.38 inches, of rainfall.

Other parts of Europe have also been gripped by scorching temperatures and severe drought, with more heat waves and little rain expected in the coming days and weeks.

In Britain, bans on using outdoor hoses were announced in two parts of the country this week after England experienced its driest July since 1935. In Spain, towns in Andalusia have restricted water usage as well.

In Germany, environmentalists expressed worry over a growing number of lakes and rivers that have dried up in the center of the country, threatening the survival of fish and other wildlife.

And in Italy, 2022 will be remembered as the driest year since 1800, “at least until now,” said Ramona Magno, of [Drought Climate Services](#), a research center.

“The drought persists, and the situation is getting worse as months pass without rain,” she said, especially in Italy’s northwestern regions where the drought classification has fluctuated between extreme and severe, and has already affected [thousands of farmers](#). The National Research Council’s climate unit said [2022 was on track](#) to be Italy’s hottest year on record, according to data.

In northeast Italy, saltwater from the Adriatic Sea has been flowing back into the Po River, putting agriculture in the fertile Po Delta at risk.

“It’s bringing agriculture to its knees,” Ms. Magno said.

[Heat waves in Europe are increasing in frequency and intensity](#) at a faster rate than almost any other part of the planet, according to scientists, who say that global warming and other factors like the circulation of the atmosphere and the ocean all play a role.

While scientists say that tying a single heat wave to climate change requires more analysis, there is little doubt that heat waves around the world are becoming hotter, more frequent and longer lasting.

And global warming increases the likelihood of drought, as higher temperatures dry out soils and vegetation and cause more precipitation to fall as rain than snow, which can affect water availability for agriculture. Climate change can also affect precipitation patterns around the world, making dry areas drier.

While Europe was not facing a heat wave as severe as the record-breaking one last month, temperatures in some areas were still intense.

Spain's State Meteorological Agency indicated that "in July, the heat has hardly abated" and that temperatures were expected to remain high over the weekend. In Cercedilla, a town north of Madrid where many escape to when temperatures rise, Angela Morán, a cafe owner, said she was looking forward to heading to Andorra, on the country's northern border, at the start of September to escape the heat.

"All I can think of is some cold weather," she said.

In Germany, more than 100 firefighters battled flames that engulfed parts of Grunewald, a forest in the west of Berlin, after munitions and fireworks exploded at the city's bomb disposal site on Thursday morning.

It was still unclear whether near-record heat had started the explosions, but the flames quickly tore through dry trees in the surrounding forest, forcing the authorities to shut down a city highway and train line. The fire had been largely contained by Friday morning.

In Britain, although only two water companies have imposed a ban on outdoor hoses, others are already warning that restrictions could be brought in if the dry weather persists. The ban currently affects millions of people in southern England, barring them from cleaning cars, watering gardens or filling pools. Rule-breakers in some areas could be hit with a 1,000 pound fine, or about \$1,200.

The drought has been particularly devastating for European agriculture, which was already suffering from an abnormally dry spring season, parching crops, making it harder to feed livestock and raising worries about reduced harvests.

This week, the European Union's executive arm urged the bloc's member states to reuse treated urban wastewater for farm irrigation.

"Freshwater resources are scarce and increasingly under pressure," Virginijus Sinkevicius, a union environment commissioner, said in a statement, adding that "in times of unprecedented temperature peaks, we need to stop wasting water and use this resource more efficiently."

In Italy, Coldiretti, a confederation of national agricultural producers, said last week that 250,000 farms were struggling because of the drought and soaring energy costs. One farmer out of 10 might never recover, the association said in a statement. On Thursday, the outgoing Italian government allocated some 200 million euros, or \$204 million, to assist farmers.

But the drought has struck in other ways as well.

In the Italian town of Borgoforte, a few miles south of Mantua, an unexploded World War II-era bomb emerged from the Po riverbed as waters declined, forcing the evacuation this weekend of 3,000 residents, local news media reported.

In Germany, the Rhine — the country's most important water transport route — was so low that some ships have been forced to reduce their cargo loads. Uniper, a German power utility, even announced Thursday that it would reduce output from its largest coal-firing power plants because insufficient coal could be shipped to the plant via the Rhine.

And in France, which gets about 70 percent of its electricity from nuclear energy, heat waves have hampered power plants because they use water to cool their reactors. Several have been forced to reduce production over the past month, or to exceed normal temperature limits for the water that they release back into natural waterways.

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| | <p>Christophe Béchu, the French minister for environmental transition, said Friday in the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence region, ahead of meetings with farmers deprived of water, that the drought was unheard-of — at least now.</p> <p>“Because of climate change,” he said, “we are going to have to get used to these kinds of episodes.”</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/05 Pennsylvania ‘violent’ home fire kills 10 |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/05/us/luzerne-county-fire-pa.html |
| GIST | <p>A fire described as “violent” and “forceful” swept through a home in Northeastern Pennsylvania early on Friday morning, killing 10 people, including several relatives of a firefighter who responded to the blaze, according to the authorities and the firefighter.</p> <p>Among those killed in the fire in Nescopeck, about 45 miles southwest of Scranton, were three children, ages 5, 6 and 7, the Pennsylvania State Police said. The other victims ranged in age from 19 to 79, officials said.</p> <p>The cause of the fire is under investigation. The State Police said three people had been able to escape safely.</p> <p>Harold Baker, a firefighter with the Nescopeck Volunteer Fire Company, was asleep early Friday when he was awakened by the chirping of his pager, which was reporting a fire at a home, with 10 people possibly trapped inside.</p> <p>Mr. Baker rushed to the station and then was among the first firefighters on the scene. As he turned the corner, his heart sank, he said in a phone interview on Friday evening. The address he had been given was incorrect. His son Dale, 19, and daughter Star, 22, were inside the home engulfed in flames, he said. In fact, Mr. Baker said, he knew everyone in the two-story home, which belonged to his brother-in-law, who was able to escape.</p> <p>“I tried to get in as fast as I can,” he said. “I tried three times, and then they realized whose house it was and why I was trying to go in there, and they yanked me off,” he said of his colleagues. “They said, ‘No, you got to get the hell out of here.’”</p> <p>When they found Dale, a volunteer firefighter who had followed in his father’s footsteps, Mr. Baker’s colleagues draped a flag over his body. “They took him out as a fallen firefighter,” he said.</p> <p>Star Baker, who was to be married next year, also did not make it out alive, Mr. Baker said, adding that he was related to eight of the 10 people who died in the fire.</p> <p>Violet Kessler of Berwick, Pa., said she was related to many of those who died.</p> <p>Among the family members she said she lost were her father, a brother, a sister-in-law, a nephew and a niece who was her goddaughter. She said some family members were visiting on Thursday with plans to spend the day together on Friday at a pool and had decided to stay overnight at the house.</p> <p>“I don’t even understand things,” she said of the losses. “I don’t even know how to take it all into my brain. It’s like a dream.”</p> <p>A neighbor, Michael Swank, said he had awakened around 2:30 a.m. and heard popping noises, which he had at first thought were gunshots. He looked outside and saw the porch of a house across the street engulfed in flames. He said that the noises he had heard seemed to be cans of paint or propane tanks igniting and exploding.</p> |

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| | <p>“I knew the Fire Department was not going to make it in time” to rescue the occupants of the house, Mr. Swank said. He neither heard nor saw any activity to indicate anyone was trying to escape from the fire, he said.</p> <p>“Boy, it was just a horrendous fire” that spread swiftly from the porch to the upper floors, he said, adding: “It was an inferno. God bless those children that were in there. They didn’t have a prayer.”</p> <p>In addition to Dale Baker and Star Baker, the State Police identified the adults who died as David Daubert Sr., 79; Brian Daubert, 42; Shannon Daubert, 45; Laura Daubert, 47; and Marian Slusser, 54.</p> <p>Mr. Swank said that tenants at the home seldom lived there for more than a year or two.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/06 Philippines, US strengthen military alliance |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/06/world/asia/blinken-philippines-us-asia-tensions.html |
| GIST | <p>MANILA — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. of the Philippines and Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken said on Saturday that their nations were committed to strengthening their military alliance, and that their governments would need to deal with rising tensions in Asia, including those involving China and Taiwan.</p> <p>Mr. Marcos said at the start of a meeting with Mr. Blinken in the presidential palace that Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan had not, in his opinion, intensified those tensions; rather, it “demonstrated how the intensity of the conflict has been at that level for a good while now, but we sort of got used to the idea and then put it aside.”</p> <p>Mr. Marcos’s comment came as China continued to hold military exercises in the waters near Taiwan, two days after it fired 11 ballistic missiles into the same area, five of them landing in waters that are part of Japan’s exclusive economic zone.</p> <p>The United States, Japan and other nations have issued statements denouncing China’s actions and calling for de-escalation. The words by Mr. Marcos also supported the assertion by Mr. Blinken and other American officials that Ms. Pelosi’s visit was consistent with U.S. policy on Taiwan, not a shifting of the status quo.</p> <p>Mr. Marcos also spoke of building on the mutual defense arrangement between the United States and the Philippines. The two countries are treaty allies, and the U.S. military has long maintained a presence in the Philippines. American officials have been discussing possible greater access to military bases in the country, doing more exercises between the two militaries and making their defense systems more interoperable — part of Washington’s Indo-Pacific strategy aimed at increasing cooperation with allies and partners to counterbalance China.</p> <p>Mr. Marcos talked about the need “to evolve that relationship in the face of all the changes that we have been seeing,” adding that “the Mutual Defense Treaty is in constant evolution.”</p> <p>Mr. Blinken agreed. “The alliance is strong,” he said, “and, I believe, can grow even stronger.”</p> <p>Mr. Marcos was sworn in at the end of June after being elected the 17th president of the Philippines in a landslide victory. He is the son and namesake of a former dictator who fled to Hawaii with his family in 1986 after a peaceful uprising by citizens furious at the father’s brazen corruption. The elder Marcos died in Hawaii in 1989.</p> <p>The question of how to confront China on its assertive behavior in the region while at the same time dealing with it as an important economic partner was one that arose throughout Mr. Blinken’s meetings with Philippine officials on Saturday, as well as in his discussions with other Asian dignitaries at a regional summit in Cambodia this week.</p> |

After Mr. Blinken and Enrique A. Manalo, the foreign minister of the Philippines, met by video, Mr. Manalo said in response to a question at a news conference that the two countries could explore the possibility of joint naval patrols in the Pacific.

Mr. Manalo spoke with Mr. Blinken by video and took part virtually in the news conference because he had tested positive for the coronavirus.

Mr. Blinken told reporters that in his discussions, he had affirmed the “ironclad” commitment of the United States to defending the Philippines and had said that any armed attack on the Philippine military would trigger pledges in their mutual defense treaty.

He also denounced illegal fishing and environmental destruction in Asian waters by “outside actors.” Together, those comments were a clear reference to actions by China. For years, nations in the region have complained of illegal fishing by Chinese boats, which are believed to operate throughout the seas with the approval of China’s Navy.

The Chinese government has made expansive claims to territorial control of the waters and land features in the South China Sea, despite competing claims by Taiwan and Southeast Asian nations, including the Philippines, and the insistence by Washington that all nations maintain freedom of navigation.

Ships from China and the Philippines faced off over the Scarborough Shoal, and an international court in The Hague ruled in 2016 that the shoal was sovereign territory of the Philippines, and that China could not claim the entire South China Sea as its own. China has continued to send ships to the area and assert control of it.

Mr. Marcos’s predecessor, Rodrigo Duterte, tried to adopt more conciliatory policies toward China, including backing down from strong territorial assertions over the South China Sea. But Mr. Marcos has [pledged to uphold](#) the ruling of the international court — a decision that will almost certainly bring his government into conflict with China.

Mr. Duterte, who held office for six years, at one point moved to end an important military agreement between the United States and the Philippines. That and other actions by Mr. Duterte, who was widely criticized for [human rights abuses](#) and authoritarian practices, strained the relationship between Manila and Washington.

But last year, Mr. Duterte [reaffirmed the Visiting Forces Agreement](#) between the countries, which the Philippine military strongly supports. The agreement sets terms for the rotation of American troops through the Philippines for drills and exercises.

In the news conference with Mr. Manalo, Mr. Blinken also criticized China for its decision on Friday to break off eight areas of cooperation and dialogue with the United States over Ms. Pelosi’s Taiwan visit, including military-to-military talks and climate change negotiations.

“Suspending climate cooperation doesn’t punish the United States; it punishes the world, particularly in the developing world,” he said. “We should not hold hostage matters of global concern because of differences between our two countries.”

Mr. Blinken said he warned Wang Yi, the foreign minister of China, at a meeting of foreign ministers on Friday morning at the summit in Cambodia against continuing escalatory actions over Ms. Pelosi’s visit. Hours later, the Chinese Foreign Ministry announced the suspension of the areas of cooperation.

“I think maintaining dialogue is arguably even more important when we’re in a period of heightened tensions, as we are now,” Mr. Blinken said at the news conference in Manila.

After the news conference, Mr. Blinken visited a Covid-19 vaccination clinic at the Manila Zoo and watched a young boy and a young girl get inoculated. Down on a knee, he told the boy he had gotten four

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| | shots himself. He later talked about the need for nations to work together to stem the coronavirus pandemic , and he fed fruit to an elephant from Sri Lanka before leaving the zoo. |
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| HEADLINE | 08/06 China military drills target abroad, home |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/06/world/asia/china-exercises-taiwan.html |
| GIST | <p>China's military continued on Saturday to menace Taiwan with a series of drills, a show of force intended not only to intimidate Taiwan and the United States, but also to appease a domestic audience that had seemed disappointed by what it perceived as an insufficiently bellicose posture.</p> <p>In what has been as much a series of propaganda exercises as military ones, China over the past few days has threatened territory that Taiwan considers its own more directly than ever before. During the drills, announced in response to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's trip to Taiwan earlier this week, Chinese missiles have landed in the waters to the north, south and east of Taiwan, and dozens of military planes have repeatedly crossed the informal median line in the Taiwan Strait that divides the island from the mainland. Taiwan's defense ministry said on Saturday that Chinese military aircraft and ships in the strait appeared to be simulating an attack on the main island of Taiwan.</p> <p>Chinese state media covered the exercises breathlessly, and the response from much of Chinese social media was ecstatic. On Weibo, a Twitter-like social media platform, several of the top trending topics were about the military exercises. A hashtag about China having the total ability to compel reunification with Taiwan, started by the official People's Daily, had been viewed more than 500 million times. Another hashtag, "What China says, it does," had more than 50 million views.</p> <p>Several widely shared articles on WeChat, another social media platform, reassured Chinese citizens that its government was playing the long game.</p> <p>The reaction was a marked departure from the public's initial evaluation of China's response to Ms. Pelosi's trip, which she had said was intended to show support for Taiwan's vibrant democracy. When she landed in Taiwan on Tuesday night, becoming the highest-ranking American official to visit the island in 25 years, many Chinese social media users could not contain their outrage and embarrassment that China had not done more to stop her.</p> <p>Chinese officials had repeatedly promised "serious consequences" if she visited. Some state media figures had gone as far as to predict military action to prevent her from landing.</p> <p>When such extreme steps did not materialize, with China instead announcing the military drills and issuing a series of condemnations, nationalist fervor turned to shame. Many said they were embarrassed of their military and their government.</p> <p>But by Saturday, the tide appeared to have turned. As official media shared photos of a Chinese soldier surveying a Taiwanese warship through binoculars, and emphasized the "unprecedented" nature of China's countermeasures, some users said they had been wrong to doubt their country. "I bow to the motherland in apology for my rude comments on the 2nd," the night of Ms. Pelosi's arrival, said one Weibo comment that was liked more than 90,000 times.</p> <p>It is hard to judge the extent to which public opinion has actually changed, given China's extensive internet censorship. But the narrative adopted by state media made clear that officials saw the need to manage the public disappointment, said Luwei Rose Luqiu, an assistant professor of journalism at Hong Kong Baptist University who studies Chinese propaganda.</p> <p>"The propaganda department failed to avoid creating unrealistic expectations among the Chinese public," she said. As a result, "the official media and some officially endorsed opinion leaders began to come out to cool down the situation."</p> |

The official swagger about the exercises reflected the fact that the current military drills are an escalation from previous similar ones. Several of the zones that China designated for this week's exercises are closer to Taiwan than areas announced during the Taiwan Strait crisis in the mid-1990s, which also involved China firing missiles around the island. Some of the missiles this time landed in waters that Japan claims as its own, leading Japan's prime minister to call for an ["immediate halt"](#) to the drills.

The Chinese military's Eastern Theater Command, which encompasses Taiwan, said in a [statement](#) on Saturday that it was testing its capabilities for land and sea assault.

China claims Taiwan as its own territory, and China's leader, Xi Jinping, has promised an eventual reunification, through force if necessary.

State media has indicated that the actions could mark a new pattern of more regular and more aggressive incursions. The Global Times, a state-run tabloid, [said in an editorial](#) on Friday that the work of promoting reunification had "entered a new stage." On Chinese state television on Saturday, Meng Xiangqing, a professor at National Defense University, [said that](#) the military's actions could become normalized.

"As long as the forces of Taiwanese independence don't stop for a day, as long as external interference doesn't stop for a day, then our actions to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity will not stop," he said.

China also said on Friday that it would [cancel or suspend talks with the United States](#) on areas including climate change and military coordination, which some analysts said increased the chances of a miscommunication spiraling into a full-fledged crisis.

The United States, Taiwan and other governments have accused China of overreacting.

But in some ways, the apparent shift in public opinion could be attributed more to successful Chinese propaganda than to the actual intensity of the drills, said [Chong Ja Ian](#), an associate professor of political science at the National University of Singapore, who studies nationalism and Chinese foreign policy.

Though the current exercises were on a larger scale and closer to Taiwan than usual, the Chinese military has been stepping up its incursions into Taiwanese-claimed territory for years, he said. And China could have gone further, for example by starting the exercises while Ms. Pelosi was still in Taiwan, or by causing more disruption to U.S. and Japanese military activity in the region, he added.

"So if there is a view that P.R.C. action has been sufficiently strident, this would owe no small part to the domestic messaging of P.R.C. state-controlled media," Professor Chong said, using the acronym for the People's Republic of China.

It is clear that Chinese officials have worked in recent days to temper the public disappointment, casting the government's response as simultaneously unwavering and forceful, and carefully calibrated. A spokeswoman for the foreign ministry, Hua Chunying, said the Chinese people were ["rational"](#) patriots, a line soon adopted by many state media outlets and nationalist commentators. One [widely shared article](#), published by the propaganda arm of the Zhejiang Province government, urged the public to consider "the most effective play to solve the Taiwan issue," adding that history would not be made overnight.

Some disappointed voices remain online. Many pointed out that though they were now being tarred as irrational, it was officials' aggressive language that had egged them on in the first place.

But many of those voices are in turn being attacked by other commenters, who accuse them of being pro-American or undermining faith in the government. Many of those accusatory comments have used similar tones or wording, raising the possibility that they were officially organized rather than organic, Professor Luqiu said.

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| | <p>“The propaganda department believes that public opinion can be controlled through censorship and technology, such as manipulating online traffic and trending topics,” she said. As a result, the disillusioned voices might become less visible.</p> <p>But below the surface, “the damage,” she added, “was inevitable.”</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/06 Xi builds security fortress: China, himself |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/06/world/asia/xi-jinping-china-security.html |
| GIST | <p>Over informal, private meals with American leaders, China’s Xi Jinping let his guard down a little. It was a decade ago, relations were less strained, and Mr. Xi, still cementing his power, hinted he worried about the Chinese Communist Party’s grip.</p> <p>Speaking privately with President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden, Mr. Xi suggested that China was a target of “color revolutions,” a phrase the party adopted from Russia for popular unrest in the name of democracy and blamed on the West. The recent “Arab Spring” uprisings across the Middle East had reinforced his concerns that China was vulnerable to public anger over corruption and inequality, both of which the country had in abundance.</p> <p>“Xi couldn’t have been more forthright that China is beset by malevolent forces and internally prey to centrifugal forces,” said Daniel R. Russel, a former senior American diplomat who accompanied Mr. Biden to China in 2011.</p> <p>“He would talk all the time about color revolutions. That’s clearly a sort of front-of-mind issue for him,” said Ryan Hass, the National Security Council director for China when Mr. Xi later visited the White House.</p> <p>Such fears have come to define the era of Mr. Xi. Over the past decade, he has pursued an all-encompassing drive to expand the very meaning of “national security” in China, bolstering the party’s control on all fronts against any perceived threats abroad that could pounce on weakness at home.</p> <p>He has strengthened, centralized and emboldened an already pervasive security apparatus, turning it into a hulking fortress that protects him and positions him as the most powerful leader since Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. Mr. Xi has built what he calls a “comprehensive” system designed for a world he sees as determined to thwart China — politically, economically, socially, militarily and technologically.</p> <p>Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit to support Taiwan against Beijing is likely to reconfirm his worldview that the United States and its allies are ready to exploit any potential weakness — and that China must always show steely vigilance. Since her visit, he has mobilized the military off the coast of Taiwan, sending the warning that China wants to curtail America’s backing for what Beijing considers a breakaway region.</p> <p>To Mr. Xi, national security is a “people’s war,” enlisting not just military officers, but also elementary schoolteachers and neighborhood workers.</p> <p>On National Security Education Day, children have lessons about dangers that include food poisoning and fires, spies and terrorists. Neighborhoods have founded “National Security People’s Line-of-Defense” groups to ferret out potential dissidents and “suspicious” foreigners. The Ministry of State Security recently offered rewards of up to \$15,000 for citizens who report information on security crimes.</p> <p>“This evil wind of ‘color revolution’ has never ceased,” Wang Linggui, a party official in China’s office for Hong Kong affairs, wrote recently in a new Chinese journal on national security. “Like the Covid virus, it constantly mutates.”</p> |

Under these pressures, China is becoming a country where — as in grim eras in its past — vigilance can easily spiral into paranoia, where officials treat even local problems as the work of ideological subversives and foreign enemies.

When residents in Shanghai, confined in their homes for weeks in a pandemic lockdown this spring, [banged pots and pans](#) in protest, local authorities [used loudspeakers to warn](#) that their display of public anger was being fanned by shadowy “foreign forces.”

“It was a spontaneous local action,” said Jia Xiaolong, who was twice taken from his home in Shanghai and questioned by the police over the kitchenware protests. “But internally that’s how officials think now — that behind every problem, every protest, is also a plot.”

As Mr. Xi prepares to claim a breakthrough third term as leader at a Communist Party congress this fall, he has signaled that national security will be even more of a focus. Strains over Covid and pandemic restrictions, superpower divisions deepened by Russia’s war in Ukraine, as well as rising food and energy prices, are part of a constant onslaught of challenges.

“What is so important and worrisome is that Xi Jinping isn’t making a distinction anymore between internal security and external security,” said [Mr. Russel](#), now a vice president at the Asia Society Policy Institute. “Xi Jinping is determined to take more forceful action — preventive action, but also pre-emptive action — and use the various tools at his disposal to meet those threats and to break through what he sees as a kind of stranglehold of the West.”

Since rising as Communist Party leader in 2012, Mr. Xi has wielded security powers in ways that seemed unlikely when he took office. He authorized mass incarceration of Uyghurs and other largely Muslim ethnic groups in the western region of Xinjiang. In Hong Kong, he abolished freedoms that China had promised to leave in place for 50 years when it regained the territory from Britain in 1997.

In the run-up to the congress, officials have been gathering in meetings to reverently [study a new textbook](#) that explains Mr. Xi’s vision. Defending China against the myriad threats, the book says, depends on “political security,” with the party and ultimately Mr. Xi as the guardians of national unity and survival.

“Unless political security is assured, the country will inevitably fall apart, scattering like a box of sand, and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation will be out of the question,” the book says.

Opponents of China’s claims over Taiwan, it warns, are “the biggest obstacle to unification of the motherland, and the gravest hidden peril to national reunification.”

‘Getting out of hand’

When he came to power, Mr. Xi moved quickly, worried that his predecessors had let corruption and cronyism rot away China’s defenses against domestic and foreign threats.

Jiang Zemin, the party leader from 1989 to 2002, had dabbled in creating a Chinese equivalent of the United States’ National Security Council, but political inertia stood in the way. His successor, Hu Jintao, increased spending on the military and domestic security, but let their chiefs turn them into fiefs where they [promoted cronies](#) and collected kickbacks, including [company shares](#) and [hoards of cash and gems](#).

“Xi Jinping’s argument was, look, internally, we have been too weak. The power decentralization is getting out of hand,” said Yun Sun, the [co-director of the China Program](#) at the Stimson Center.

One year after Mr. Xi took office, he announced before hundreds of senior officials that China would establish a National Security Commission. “Strengthening centralized, unified leadership of national security matters is a pressing need,” [he declared](#).

Some political insiders initially assumed that the commission would mimic the White House’s National Security Council and focus on foreign policy. But at the commission’s first meeting in 2014, Mr. Xi told

officials that the threats demanded a “comprehensive view of national security.” Under this approach, domestic and foreign dangers were often seen through a prism of ideological rivalry with the West.

“It legitimizes from their point of view a stronger coercive dimension in nearly every area of government,” said [Joel Wuthnow](#), a senior research fellow at the National Defense University who has [studied Mr. Xi’s security policies](#).

Li Ming-che, a community college worker from Taiwan, felt the brunt of this heightened vigilance. For years, he had stayed in contact with human rights activists in China, supporting them and their families after growing numbers were detained under Mr. Xi.

When Mr. Li made a visit to China in 2017, security police seized him as soon as he crossed the border, and interrogators accused him of plotting “color revolution.”

In previous times when Chinese leaders were less alarmed, Mr. Li might have been expelled or briefly imprisoned. In 2017, he was sentenced to five years for subverting state power. In prison, he said, he and other inmates worked nearly every day, making gloves, shoes and backpacks. He was barred from talking to all but a few approved prisoners.

Mr. Li, who was [released in April](#) and returned to Taiwan, was among a handful of human rights activists who met with Ms. Pelosi during her visit.

“Xi Jinping has written this system into law, and it’s really emblematic of the constant expansion of the state security system,” he said. “It’s fully entered people’s lives.”

‘The edge of an abyss’

Four years passed between the founding of the National Security Commission and the next time it surfaced in major state media, in 2018.

The commission is one of the most secretive bodies of a secretive state. Its size, staffing and powers remain unclear. Its officials rarely meet foreigners. The full membership gathers roughly once a year, like other top bodies of Chinese leaders. But mentions of the security meetings usually emerge only on [local party websites](#) summarizing its orders for officials.

Behind the scenes, it has become increasingly active and organized, such websites indicate. The commission had “solved many problems that we had long wanted to but couldn’t,” Mr. Xi said when it met in 2018.

The national commission established local security committees across provinces, cities and counties. These local committees focus on domestic threats like protests and dissent. They often remind cadres that crisis or insurrection are not remote threats; they could break out on their doorstep.

Chinese universities were pressed to [observe and report on](#) “ideological” problems among teachers and students, which included keeping track of their online comments. Security officials [ordered](#) cadres to closely monitor persistent protesters, people with histories of [mental illness](#), [former prisoners](#) and others deemed risks to safety and stability.

“Don’t simplistically equate ‘nothing has gone wrong’ with ‘nothing will go wrong,’” [the local security committee](#) of Yongchuan District in southwest China said last year. “At every moment always act as if we’re walking on thin ice, as if on the edge of an abyss.”

Through [new rules](#) and personnel appointments, Mr. Xi has made sure that this expanding system stays firmly in his hands.

Mr. Xi is the chairman of the National Security Commission, and a senior aide of his, [Ding Xuexiang](#), is widely believed to be head of the Commission’s administrative office, steering its operations, though Mr.

Ding's role has not been officially confirmed. The chief deputy in the office is [Chen Wenqing](#), the minister of state security.

"The world is confronting great changes of the kind not seen in a century, and in particular China-U.S. relations are undergoing a new test," Mr. Chen [wrote in a party journal in 2019](#), one of his rare public statements.

By then, China's economic and military reach, and Mr. Xi's hard-line policies, were stirring anxiety in Washington and other capitals — which in turn was raising concern in Beijing about Western intentions.

Mr. Xi's alarm intensified in 2019 when demonstrations filled streets in Hong Kong for months. As protesters clashed with the police, Beijing warned that Hong Kong risked succumbing to a "color revolution" backed by Western governments.

"Points of turbulence and danger across the globe are growing," Mr. Xi told officials in that same year, according to a [lecture](#) by a professor from the People's Public Security University of China. "The new trends and features of color revolution are increasing the political and ideological risks bearing down on China."

Nobody is a bystander

In April of this year, Ukraine was at war with Russian invaders. Shanghai was under an exhausting pandemic lockdown. Tensions with the Biden administration were festering.

Yet when officials across China gathered to hear about the latest secretive meeting of the National Security Commission, its paramount demand was "political security" — that is, defending the Communist Party and Mr. Xi in the lead-up to the party congress.

In the commission meeting, Mr. Xi emphasized "the commanding status and core significance of political security," [said a brief a report from Tibet](#), one of the few official sources to [disclose the event](#).

Across China, a flow of similar announcements points to how the party's focus on security — especially political security — is likely to deepen, reshaping the country.

The National Security Commission has claimed a role in making government rules, [including data security](#) legislation. It has ordered [financial security assessments](#) of banks. When Chinese regulators [fined the ride-hailing giant](#), Didi Global, \$1.2 billion in July for breaches, [they cited unspecified](#) "serious" national security violations.

China's first full National Security Strategy, an internal document laying out broad goals through 2025, has filtered through the bureaucracy since its approval last year. It calls for ensuring that China can provide more of its own food and core technology and for developing ways to defuse social unrest before it erupts, [according to a summary](#) issued when party leaders approved it late last year.

The new, 150-page textbook on Mr. Xi's "comprehensive outlook on national security" offers clues about that strategy. China must deepen its partnership with Russia to withstand international threats, says the book, whose authors include officials from the National Security Commission.

"Hostile forces at home and abroad have never let up for one moment in their strategy to Westernize and split apart our country," a section on political security says.

Only a few prominent voices in China openly question the security expansion, warning that it risks locking the country into intransigent policies.

"Pursuing absolute security is, first, unrealistic; second, too costly; and third, will harm the country in pursuing other values," Jia Qingguo, a professor at Peking University who is a senior member of a Chinese

government consultative council, [wrote in a Chinese journal](#) this year. “A necessary balance must be struck between national security and carrying forward democracy.”

On the same day that Ms. Pelosi left Taiwan, state security officers in eastern China [detained a Taiwanese man](#), Yang Chih-yuan, whom Chinese media described as a supporter of independence for the island. Chinese [television news](#) showed him being held on each arm by officers as another officer laid out the accusations.

“Now and for some time to come, the situation of national security struggle across the Taiwan Strait will be more complex and grim,” a Chinese policy journal for Taiwan [said last year](#). “The United States is always playing the ‘Taiwan card’ more.”

Officials cite national security to restrict lawyers and their clients, or to silence public complaints about financial or land disputes. Academics face tighter monitoring of their teaching and research. Beijing’s combative worldview, other Chinese [critics have said](#), has pushed China [too close to Russia](#) and deterred debate over its invasion of Ukraine.

Children also absorb Mr. Xi’s precepts each National Security Education Day on April 15, which commemorates the first meeting of the National Security Commission in 2014.

In one school in Beijing, children this year drew pictures of vigilant citizens [beating up masked villains](#). “In defending national security, nobody is an outsider or a bystander,” [said a presentation](#) at an elementary school in northwest China.

It reminded the pupils of the Ministry of State Security’s phone number for reporting anything suspicious: 12339.

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| HEADLINE | 08/06 Fighting around nuclear plant safety fears |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/06/world/europe/russia-ukraine-war-nuclear-plant.html |
| GIST | <p>DRUZHKIVKA, Ukraine — Fighting raged on Saturday near a sprawling nuclear power plant in the south of Ukraine, despite warnings from nuclear safety watchdogs earlier this week that conditions there were posing risks and “out of control.”</p> <p>The Russian military has been using the Zaporizhzhia plant, Europe’s largest, as a base to assault the Ukrainian-controlled town of Nikopol across the river. On Saturday it fired a volley of Grad rockets that damaged 11 apartment buildings and 36 privately owned houses, and wounded three people, the Ukrainian military said.</p> <p>The assault also knocked out electricity, water and natural gas supplies in the town, where residents have been fleeing from the artillery attacks and attendant risk of radiation, the Ukrainian military said.</p> <p>Russian forces began staging artillery attacks from the plant about a month ago, and the Ukrainian military has said it cannot shoot back because of concerns that it would hit a reactor at the plant, igniting a radiation catastrophe.</p> <p>Ukraine has also accused the Russians of setting off explosions at the plant intended to unnerve European allies about nuclear safety and discourage arming Ukraine.</p> <p>The Zaporizhzhia plant occupies a perilous spot on the broad Dnipro River, along the frontline of the war between Russia and Ukraine. The Ukrainian Army controls the west bank, while the Russians are entrenched around the plant on the river’s east bank.</p> |

The battles near the nuclear plant came as clashes continued elsewhere in Ukraine, including Russian artillery and tank assaults on the eastern town of Bakhmut, the site of some of the fiercest fighting along the front in recent days.

The Ukrainian military continued striking targets far behind Russia's front lines, hoping to whittle away at ammunition and fuel supplies. American-provided HIMARS rockets have helped shift the tide in the war, and on Friday Ukraine hit three command posts and six ammunition depots at various positions behind enemy lines along the front, it said in a statement.

[Outrage over nuclear safety violations](#) — Rafael Grossi, the head of the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, said on Tuesday that "every principle of nuclear safety has been violated" — has done nothing to dislodge the Russian army from the site, and fighting has continued daily, with explosions in the early afternoon on Friday. Mr. Grossi called conditions at the plant "out of control."

Mr. Grossi said he was far more worried about Zaporizhzhia than he was about Chernobyl, the site of the 1986 nuclear disaster, also in Ukraine, that radiated the surrounding area and imperiled Europe.

"Chernobyl, I think we are fine," said Mr. Grossi, noting that his agency had inspected the plant regularly and had restored sensors for radiation monitoring and other detection devices.

But the I.A.E.A. has been unable to access key parts of the reactors at Zaporizhzhia, as the occupying Russian force and surrounding shelling make it too dangerous for inspectors. That raises the prospect that if damage is done to the facility, it may be difficult, at best, to assess the danger, he added.

In a statement issued on Saturday, the Ukrainian state nuclear company, Enerhoatom, said Russian soldiers have occupied basements at the plant and are preventing employees from sheltering in them, despite the risks from combat in the area. "People do not have shelter and are in danger," the statement said.

Blocking access to the shelters comes atop other psychological stresses for Ukrainian workers on the reactor control room and other plant employees, who have been subjected to harsh interrogations including torture with electrical shocks, according to Ukrainian officials. The tension poses risks of accidents by human error, the officials have said.

The blasts on Friday destroyed high-voltage electrical wires, forcing the Ukrainian workers to reduce output at one of the plant's six reactors. Two others had already been idled and a third was undergoing routine maintenance.

Later in the day, a second series of explosions damaged a building on the plant's premises, according to Ukraine's state nuclear power company. The company said Russia staged the blasts; Russia's military said the attacks came from the Ukrainian side.

In his nightly address to Ukrainians, President Volodymyr Zelensky on Friday highlighted what he called the "brazen crime" of the Russian military using the nuclear power plant as cover.

"The occupiers created another extremely risky situation for everyone in Europe," Mr. Zelensky said, citing the explosions earlier in the day at the plant. "This is the largest nuclear power plant on our continent. And any shelling of this facility is an open, brazen crime, an act of terror."

An adviser to Mr. Zelensky, Mykhailo Podolyak, addressed the risk even more bluntly in a post on Twitter on Saturday, suggesting a disaster sending radiation wafting over Europe might occur any day.

"This morning in Europe became possible just because the Zaporizhzhia NPP miraculously did not explode yesterday," he wrote, using shorthand for nuclear power plant. He suggested that the United Nations should negotiate a Russian withdrawal from the plant that would put the site under control of an independent "special commission."

Western nations have imposed heavy sanctions on Russia for its war on Ukraine, and Mr. Zelensky called on them to extend those to Russia's state nuclear power company, Rosatom. The company has signed contracts with dozens of countries around the world, including China, India, Turkey and Finland, to design and build nuclear power stations

"This is purely a matter of safety," Mr. Zelensky said. "The one who creates nuclear threats to other nations is definitely not capable of using nuclear technologies safely."

Mr. Grossi, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said Tuesday that the war in Ukraine was "threatening one of the world's biggest nuclear power programs," noting multiple safety violations at the Zaporizhzhia plant and describing the situation as "out of control."

"Inaction is unconscionable," he said. "If an accident occurs at the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant, we will not have a natural disaster to blame. We will have only ourselves to answer to."

Basing military equipment at the plant gives Russia a tactical advantage, Ukrainian army commanders and civilian officials say.

Russia has parked an armored personnel carrier and trucks in a machine room of reactor No. 1, according to Dmytro Orlov, the mayor of Enerhodar, the town that is home to the nuclear plant.

Russia puts rocket artillery launchers between reactor buildings, Mr. Orlov said. Ukraine's military intelligence agency claimed to have hit one with a drone munition in July.

Russia's use of the site for military purposes is also intended to signal the danger of continuing Western policies of arming Ukraine, Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council said in a statement.

The council's Center for Counteracting Disinformation identified the aim as increasing "fear in Europe of the possibility of a nuclear catastrophe and reduce the desire of Western countries to provide military assistance."

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| HEADLINE | 08/06 Think 9% inflation bad? Try 90% |
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| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/06/world/americas/inflation-argentina.html |
| GIST | <p>BUENOS AIRES — Eduardo Rabuffetti is an Argentine who has been to the United States once, his 1999 honeymoon in Miami. Yet he probably knows the \$100 bill better than most Americans.</p> <p>He says he can pick out a counterfeit by touch. He can tell you exactly what \$100,000 looks like. (Ten half-inch stacks, small enough to hold in one hand.) And on numerous occasions, he has walked down the streets of Buenos Aires with tens of thousands of U.S. dollars tucked into his jacket.</p> <p>That is because Mr. Rabuffetti, a property developer who has built two office towers and a house here, bought the land for each of those buildings in \$100 bills.</p> <p>"Here, if you don't actually see the money, nobody signs anything," he said. "After the number of crises we've been through, let's just say you get used to it."</p> <p>It is not just Mr. Rabuffetti. Nearly every big purchase in Argentina — land, houses, cars, expensive art — is done in tall stacks of U.S. currency. To save up, Argentines stuff bundles of American bills into old clothes, beneath floor boards and in bombproof safe deposit boxes past nine locked gates and five stories beneath the ground.</p> <p>Argentines hold so much U.S. currency — experts believe perhaps more than anywhere outside the United States — sometimes it gets thrown away by mistake. Last month, passers-by found tens of thousands of dollars blowing around at an Argentine dump.</p> |

The dollar is king in Argentina because the Argentine peso is disintegrating in value, particularly over the past month. One year ago, about 180 pesos could buy \$1 on the widely used black market. Now it takes 298 pesos to buy a buck. With the peso plummeting, prices are soaring to keep up. Many economists expect inflation here, already at 64 percent this year, to hit 90 percent by December.

It is one of the country's worst economic crises in decades, and that is saying something for Argentina.

As countries across the world try to cope with rising prices, there is perhaps no major economy that understands how to live with inflation better than Argentina.

The country has struggled with rapidly rising prices for much of the past 50 years. During a chaotic stretch in the late 1980s, inflation hit a nearly unbelievable 3,000 percent and residents rushed to snatch up groceries before clerks with price guns could make their rounds. Now high inflation is back, exceeding 30 percent every year since 2018.

To understand how Argentines cope, we spent two weeks in and around Buenos Aires, talking to economists, politicians, farmers, restaurateurs, realtors, barbers, taxi drivers, money changers, street performers, street vendors and the unemployed.

The economy is not always the best conversation starter, but in Argentina, it animated just about everyone, eliciting curses, deep sighs and informed opinions about monetary policy. One woman happily showed off her hiding spot for a wad of U.S. dollars (an old ski jacket), another explained how she stuffed cash into her bra to buy a condo, and a Venezuelan waitress wondered whether she had immigrated to the right country.

One thing became strikingly clear: Argentines have developed a highly unusual relationship with their money.

They spend their pesos as quickly as they get them. They buy everything from TVs to potato peelers in installments. They don't trust banks. They hardly use credit. And after years of constant price hikes, they are left with little idea of how much things should cost.

Argentina shows that people will find a way to adapt to years of high inflation, living in an economy that is impossible to fathom almost anywhere else in the world. Life is especially manageable for those with the means to make the upside-down system work. But all those striking workarounds mean that few who have held political power during years of economic distress have found themselves paying a real price.

"We ask ourselves the same thing: How is society allowing these things to happen?" said Juan Piantoni, the head of Ingot, a safe-deposit-box company where business is booming as Argentines pay to stash their cash. "At this moment, I think we're on the eve of a situation that could lead to a major crisis," he added. "No one has lit the fuse yet. But the day that happens, we'll see what we're up against."

So far, things have remained largely calm. Wages for many jobs are rising at nearly 50 percent a year. Landlords can raise rents at similar rates. And millions of Argentines use the black market to evade government restrictions on buying U.S. dollars.

The result is that in the wealthier areas of Argentina's capital, construction continues apace and restaurants and bars are packed. The next dinner reservation for two at Anchoita, one of the city's hippest restaurants, is in January 2023.

In poorer neighborhoods, people collect scrap cardboard to sell, pool their money for food and swap used goods to avoid the peso altogether. Argentina's poor typically don't have jobs with automatic wage increases, and they certainly don't have extra cash to buy U.S. dollars. That means they are left making few pesos while everything around them gets much, much more expensive. About 37 percent of Argentines now live in poverty, up from 30 percent in 2016.

On July 2, Argentina's economic minister resigned. Over the next 26 days, the peso's value dropped 26 percent. Then President Alberto Fernandez fired the new economic minister. It was the 21st time that an Argentine economic minister lasted two months or less.

Argentina's recent bout with hyperinflation is linked to the same things that have driven up prices worldwide, including the war in Ukraine, supply-chain constraints and big increases in public spending.

But many economists believe Argentina's inflation is also self-inflicted. In short, the country spends far more than it takes in to fund free or deeply subsidized health care, universities, energy and public transportation. To make up for the shortfall, it prints more pesos.

The International Monetary Fund, which is owed \$44 billion from Argentina, has asked the government to cut its deficit and pass stricter monetary policies. On Wednesday, the new minister, Sergio Massa, made one of the most significant steps in years when he pledged that Argentina would stop printing pesos to fund its budget.

Yet many Argentines were skeptical that the country was ready to make the tough choices necessary.

"We might need the patient to have a heart attack before the family says, 'Let's do the surgery,'" said Hugo Alconada Mon, one of the country's top investigative journalists and a best-selling author who spent almost the last of his savings recently on car repairs. "But how many people will end up in poverty because of that? How many people will leave the country?"

Abandoning price tags

Argentines are hoping the current moment does not spiral into a disaster like 2001, when there was a run on the banks.

That year, it became clear that foreign investors believed the Argentine peso was worth far less than the government's official rate, and Argentines rushed to get their money before it was lost. Instead, the government halted withdrawals — and then gave them all a haircut, reducing everyone's savings in a sudden devaluation. The president resigned and left the government offices in a helicopter to avoid the angry crowds in the regal square out front, Plaza de Mayo.

Two decades later, the angry crowds are still in Plaza de Mayo. Thousands of Argentines gathered there last month to protest the soaring inflation.

Ana Mabel was on the outskirts of the crowd, mixing peanuts and caramelized sugar in a metal vat. She was selling bags of candied peanuts for 200 pesos each, or about 70 cents; she had charged 150 pesos a week earlier. But that increase hardly kept up with her costs. Everything she needed had gotten pricier in just the past few weeks: the peanuts, the sugar, the oil, the gas tank, and the plastic baggies to package the treat. She has five children to support, and for the first time, she had taken on debt.

"Nothing regulates the prices," she said, frustrated, slowly turning the peanuts in the vat. "The businessmen don't want it. The government can't. And that all falls on us."

For Argentines, it is an old story. In 2017, prices had risen so much that Argentina doubled the size of its largest bank note to 1,000 pesos, then worth about \$58 on the black market. Now that note is worth about \$3.45 — about the price of a Big Mac. An iPhone can now cost more than 1 million pesos.

Many Argentines have lost their bearings on value. Menus are constantly changed. Taxi meters are frequently adjusted. And price tags are often outdated.

Oscar Benitez runs a meticulously organized hardware store the size of a large walk-in closet. He sells 80,000 different products, and he hardly knows the price of any of them.

That is because they change every few days, updated in a running list sent by his suppliers that he checks on his computer for every sale. He has largely abandoned price tags.

He shows a pair of scissors that the supplier says should now cost 600 pesos. “A month ago, it was worth 400 pesos,” he said, consulting his list. “A year ago, it was worth 120 pesos.”

He looked exasperated. “It’s sad. But for me, it was always like this,” he said. “If I wasn’t 51 years old, I’d be in the United States, which is what I’m now trying to make happen for my daughters.”

Prices are fluctuating so much that in recent weeks many companies have halted sales to see where prices settle, making it difficult to find certain items, including cooking oil and car parts. Some farmers are also holding onto their wheat and soybeans, betting prices will rise — and blunting the economic benefits of a commodity boom that should benefit an exporter like Argentina.

At a small shop in downtown Buenos Aires, Noelia Mendoza was selling her last stock of toilet paper. Her suppliers said they had no more, so she had raised her prices. A pack of four single-ply rolls now cost 290 pesos, or \$1, up 50 percent from a month earlier. “There is going to be a shortage,” she said.

Her friend standing nearby, Carla Cejas, chimed in: “I never understood the bidet until now.”

A duffel bag full of 10,000 \$100 bills

Ignacio Jauand, a 34-year-old publicist, buys everything he can in installments, including his bed, his clothes, a PlayStation 5 and a potato peeler.

It’s not that he can’t afford them. It’s that he’s betting the value of the peso will fall. If he’s right, his final payments cost significantly less. That bet, he said, has always paid off. “The last installment I paid for the TV or the fridge cost two or three McDonald’s combos,” he said.

“Buying stuff is how you beat inflation,” he added.

That is the mantra of Argentina. Pesos disintegrate in value, so you better spend them as quickly as you can.

People go out to eat or buy appliances, art or cars, while shop owners stock up on inventory, betting prices will only go up. “When I think of my savings in pesos, I say, ‘Let’s pay for a trip, let’s renew something in the house, let’s buy stuff,’” said Eduardo Levy Yeyati, an Argentine economist and visiting professor at Harvard University. “Otherwise I feel like I’m losing money every day by keeping it in the bank.”

Perhaps Argentines’ favorite things to buy? Dollars.

Argentina’s central bank estimates that Argentine households and nonfinancial firms hold more than \$230 billion in foreign financial assets, mostly denominated in U.S. currency. Most of that money is held in international bank accounts, but some is also stashed in safes and hiding places across the country.

That dependence on the dollar is bad for the peso, so the government restricts Argentines from buying more than \$200 in U.S. currency each month. For that amount, Argentines can use the official government exchange rate, which says each U.S. dollar is worth about 130 pesos.

But a different exchange rate — used for Western Union wires, certain corporate transactions, and the black market — values the peso at less than half that: Each dollar is now worth about 300 pesos. (Because this rate is a truer measure of the open market’s view of the peso, we used it to convert values in this article.)

In downtown Buenos Aires, men and women dubbed “arbolitos,” or little trees, stand on street corners hawking dollars. They lead buyers to so-called caves to change the money in private.

It's all illegal, but police standing nearby don't seem to mind. Many use the market themselves.

Juan, a money changer who delivers wads of cash on his motorbike, said three of his regular customers are police officers. Even so, he agreed to speak on the condition that only his first name be used.

Money changers and cave managers estimated the black market moves \$3 million to \$4 million a day. Those dollars underpin much of the economy here.

Yanina Arias, a Buenos Aires real-estate agent, said she has completed hundreds of deals over her 10-year career, but never one in pesos. Sellers often require "dollar bills without stains, without rips, and that are big-faced," Ms. Arias said. "Small-faced bills are not accepted."

The face in question is Benjamin Franklin's. The black market generally offers 3 percent more for newer \$100 notes with Mr. Franklin's enlarged portrait because they are harder to counterfeit.

Seven Argentines described paying for properties in cash, but few were willing to allow their names to be printed because they were worried about being audited.

To head to the bank to close the deal, they described stuffing tens of thousands of dollars down their pants and into grocery bags full of produce. Ms. Arias said wealthier people have hired armored trucks.

A financial-services worker in Buenos Aires said that when she sold her family's farm for \$1 million a few years ago, the buyer handed her a duffel bag full of 10,000 \$100 bills. Later, when she bought her apartment, she put \$100,000 of the cash into the pockets of an oversized coat and hustled to the buyers' home. The sellers, an older couple, insisted on counting each bill by hand.

Trading milk for diapers

After Adela Castillo and her husband lost their jobs during the pandemic — she was a caretaker and he worked in shipping — they took a big risk. They converted their home in one of Buenos Aires's poorest neighborhoods into a shop selling cement, limestone, paint and plasterboard.

At first, it was paying off. The government was building new affordable housing in the neighborhood, and it became a big buyer. To keep up, she needed a forklift. And to buy one, she needed \$15,000 in cash.

A bank would never make that kind of loan, but luckily, she had a family friend who had that much stashed away. "A huge favor," she said. "Nobody lends you money like that."

She bought the forklift. "It helped a ton," she said. Then the value of the peso continued to plummet. "He wants me to pay back in dollars. He doesn't want pesos," she said. With each decline in the value of the peso, her debt has effectively grown bigger.

"It's a screwed-up situation," she said, standing outside her shop, limestone dust in her hair and down her fleece. She was not sure how she would pay it off. "We're treading water," she said. "We're fighting."

With the peso losing so much value, some poor Argentines are trying to avoid it altogether.

Silvina López, 37, was standing in the biting cold with her infant. She needed diapers but she was broke. After a stroke, Ms. López was blind in one eye and didn't work, while her husband was a construction laborer when it was sunny. But his wages — about \$7 a day — hadn't increased while the prices did.

But here, next to a bus stop in the poor suburb of Lomas de Zamora, she didn't need pesos. Instead, she had sacks of powdered milk, handouts from the government that she could trade in order to make sure her 1-month-old, Milagro, or Miracle in Spanish, had diapers.

Another woman had set up shop on the street corner to barter, and she traded Ms. López a 12-pack of diapers, two bags of sugar and a box of cookies for the powdered milk. Ms. López's 8-year-old daughter, Mia, immediately tore into the cookies.

"My family, my siblings, they all come here," she said. "They have lots of children, too."

During the recession that accompanied the 2001 run on the banks, a half-million people were regularly meeting in so-called "trueque" clubs, or bartering exchanges, to swap goods without pesos. The clubs largely disintegrated over the years, but with inflation again soaring, they are making a comeback.

On a recent Sunday, nearly 100 people hustled among two dozen tables, swapping their wares: used clothes, cleaning supplies, homemade pizza dough, insecticide, fried quince pastries. To facilitate the trades, they used "créditos," the club's own currency, printed onto white paper.

Women clutched handfuls of the notes as they shopped at their neighbors' tables. They all said they preferred the crédito to the peso.

At one point, an organizer who was selling Avon makeup, Karina Sanchez, paused the cumbia music to make an announcement: They were exchanging older, smaller denomination créditos for newer, larger ones. She showed much older notes worth one-half a crédito. Last year, they introduced a 1,000-crédito note.

Yes, Ms. Sanchez said, the crédito was experiencing inflation, too.

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| HEADLINE | 08/06 Economy sends strange, conflicting signals |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/06/business/economy/economy-jobs-inflation.html |
| GIST | <p>To understand the strange, conflicting signals being sent by the U.S. economy right now, it helps to look at Williston, N.D., in about 2010.</p> <p>North Dakota was in the midst of an oil boom. Scores of rigs were drilling hundreds of wells, filling up train cars with crude because there hadn't been time to build a pipeline. Pretty much anyone who wanted a job could find one, even the teenagers who dropped out of high school to work in the oil fields. Wages soared. Fast-food restaurants offered signing bonuses. State coffers filled up with tax revenue.</p> <p>Yet as good as the economy was, it also felt unstable. Restaurants couldn't hire enough workers. Housing was in short supply, and costly. Local infrastructure couldn't withstand the sudden surge in demand. Prices for practically everything soared.</p> <p>"It was chaotic," said David Flynn, an economist at the University of North Dakota who lived through the boom and has studied it. "The economy was doing well, revenues for the local areas were up across the board, but you were still short of workers and businesses were having trouble."</p> <p>"That sounds a lot like the stories you've been hearing at the national level for the past couple years," he added.</p> <p>Economists and politicians have spent weeks arguing about whether the United States is in a recession. If it is, the recession is unlike any previous one. Employers added more than half a million jobs in July, and the unemployment rate is at a half-century low.</p> <p>Typically, in recessions, the problem is that businesses don't want to hire and consumers don't want to spend. Right now, businesses want to hire, but can't find the workers to fill open jobs. Consumers want to spend, but can't find cars to buy or flights to book.</p> |

Recessions, in other words, are about too much supply and too little demand. What the U.S. economy is facing is the opposite. Just like North Dakota in 2010.

The underlying causes are different, of course. Williston was hit by a surge in demand as companies and workers flooded into what had been a small city in the Northern Plains. The United States was hit by a pandemic, which caused a shift in demand and disrupted supply chains around the world. And the comparison goes only so far: Williston's population roughly doubled from 2010 to 2020. No one expects that to happen to the country as a whole.

Still, whether local or national, the most obvious consequence is the same: inflation. When demand outstrips supply — whether for steel-toe boots in an oil boomtown or for restaurant seats in the aftermath of a pandemic — prices rise. Mr. Flynn recalled going out to eat during the boom and discovering that hamburgers cost \$20, a feeling of sticker shock familiar to practically any American these days.

There is also a subtler consequence: uncertainty. No one knows how long the boom will last, or what the economy will look like on the other side of it, which makes it hard for workers, businesses and governments to adapt. In Williston, companies and governments were reluctant to invest in the apartment buildings, elementary schools and sewage-treatment plants that the community suddenly needed — but might not need by the time they were complete.

“Think of it as a situation of every day, seemingly, was a new shock, so you couldn't even adjust before a new one was hitting,” Mr. Flynn said. “It's that constant adjustment. Completely unpredictable.”

Businesses have now spent two and a half years in a state of constant adjustment. In early 2020, practically overnight, Americans traded restaurant meals for home-baked bread, and gym memberships for socially distanced bike rides. Those shifts caused huge disruptions, in part because businesses were reluctant to make long-term investments to address short-term spikes in demand.

“That was always going to cause its own problems on prices and shortages,” said Adam Ozimek, chief economist for the Economic Innovation Group, a Washington research organization. “Businesses were never going to be like, ‘I'm going to build 10 new bicycle factories right now because we're in a long-term bicycling boom.’”

Some other shifts caused by the pandemic are likely to prove longer lasting. But it is hard for businesses to know which.

“I think businesses are correct that the current state of the economy can't really hold — something has to give,” Mr. Ozimek said.

To most people, of course, this doesn't feel like a boom. Measures of consumer confidence are at record lows, and Americans overwhelmingly say they are dissatisfied with the economy. That perception is grounded in reality: High inflation is eroding — and in some cases erasing — the benefits of a strong job market for many workers. Hourly earnings, adjusted for inflation, are falling at their fastest pace in decades.

“I know people will hear today's extraordinary jobs report and say they don't see it, they don't feel it in their own lives,” President Biden said Friday. “I know how hard it is. I know it's hard to feel good about job creation when you already have a job and you're dealing with rising prices — food and gas and so much more. I get it.”

Tara Sinclair, an economist at George Washington University, said the United States wasn't experiencing a true boom. That would imply a virtuous circle, in which prosperity begets investment, which begets more prosperity and makes the economy more productive in the long term — a rising tide that lifts all boats.

Instead, the lingering disruptions of the pandemic, uncertainty over what the post-Covid economy will look like and fears of a recession have made businesses reluctant to make bets on the future. Business investment fell in the most recent quarter. Employers are hiring, but they are leaning heavily on one-time bonuses rather than permanent pay increases.

“It’s not an economic boom in the sense of wanting to invest long term,” Ms. Sinclair said. “It’s a boomtown situation where everyone’s just waiting for it to get cut off.”

Indeed, the Federal Reserve is trying to cut it off. Jerome H. Powell, the Fed chair, has described the labor market, with twice as many open jobs as unemployed workers, as “unsustainably hot,” and is trying to cool it through aggressive interest rate increases. He and his colleagues have argued repeatedly that a more normal economy — less like a boomtown, with lower inflation — will be better for workers in the long term.

“We all want to get back to the kind of labor market we had before the pandemic, where differences between racial and gender differences and that kind of thing were at historic minimums, where participation was high, where inflation was low,” Mr. Powell said last month. “We want to get back to that. But that’s not happening. That’s not going to happen without restoring price stability.”

Mr. Biden and his advisers, too, have argued that a cooling economy is inevitable and even necessary as the country resets from its reopening-fueled surge. In an opinion article in The Wall Street Journal in May, Mr. Biden warned that monthly job growth was likely to slow, to around 150,000 a month from more than 500,000, in “a sign that we are successfully moving into the next phase of the recovery.”

So far, that transition has been elusive. Forecasters had expected hiring to slow in July, to a gain of about 250,000 jobs. Instead, the figure was above 500,000, the highest in five months, the Labor Department reported on Friday. But the labor force — the number of people who are either working or actively looking for work — shrank and remains stubbornly below its prepandemic level, a sign that the supply constraints that have contributed to high inflation won’t abate quickly.

Ms. Sinclair said it shouldn’t be surprising that it was taking time to readjust after the coronavirus disrupted nearly every aspect of life and work. As of July, the U.S. economy, in the aggregate, had recovered all the jobs lost during the early weeks of the pandemic. But beneath the surface, the situation looks drastically different from what it was in February 2020. There are nearly half a million more warehouse workers today, and nearly 90,000 fewer child care workers. Millions of people are still working remotely. Others have changed careers, started businesses or stopped working.

“We have to remember that we are still sorting that out,” Ms. Sinclair said. “It was a big economic shock, and the fact that we came out of it as quickly as we did is still incredibly impressive. These residual pains are us just still adjusting to it.”

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| HEADLINE | 08/05 Emerald City Comic Con reinstates masks |
| SOURCE | https://www.q13fox.com/news/emerald-city-comic-con-reinstates-mask-mandate-for-august-event |
| GIST | <p>SEATTLE - One of the PNW's largest conventions, Emerald City Comic Con, has announced that it is reinstating a mask mandate for its August convention.</p> <p>Face coverings will be required throughout all areas of the convention.</p> <p>ECCC said it will ask cosplayers to remove any helmets or masks upon entry to ensure that the attendee is wearing a mask.</p> <p>"Remember, it can get hot under those helmets/cosplay masks, take breaks periodically to give yourself a chance to recharge," ECCC said in a news release.</p> |

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| | Fans will be able to remove their face coverings for celebrity photo ops-- ECCC said it has increased air filtration and cleaning in those specific areas. Masks must be worn in the lines to meet the celebrities or other guests. |
| | ECC is taking place from Thursday, Aug. 18 through Sunday, Aug. 21 at the Seattle Convention Center . |
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| HEADLINE | 08/05 Lakewood PD beefs up staff; new recruits |
| SOURCE | https://komonews.com/news-brief-newsletter/from-doctor-to-officer-unconventional-paths-to-policing |
| GIST | <p>LAKEWOOD, Wash. — Staffing is at crisis levels for the Seattle Police Department and other law enforcement agencies in Western Washington, but the Lakewood law enforcement agency has bolstered its ranks recently after being down nearly two dozen officers.</p> <p>The number of current SPD officers is at a historic low and the city's new recruitment plan unveiled last month includes looking for candidates with backgrounds from outside law enforcement.</p> <p>There are already police recruits that are taking an unconventional path to law enforcement careers.</p> <p>With a Masters Degree in finance, Molly Yoshikawa was putting her education to work.</p> <p>"I ultimately ended up with the Washington State Department of Financial Institution as an auditor," she said.</p> <p>And at the same time, Jack Johnson graduated medical school and was working as a naturopathic doctor.</p> <p>"Just treating lots and lots of COVID," he said. "It burned me out for sure, yeah, definitely."</p> <p>But Johnson is now dropping the title of doctor and trading it for police officer.</p> <p>Yoshikawa has left auditing behind as well.</p> <p>Both are slated to graduate soon from the Criminal Justice Training Commission and join the Lakewood Police Department, which has been working to replenish its ranks after being down 20 officers.</p> <p>That's a big hit to a department comprised of only 95 people.</p> <p>But Lakewood PD is now one officer above its normal staffing level after it over hired to prepare for pending retirements.</p> <p>Chief Mike Zaro credits the success in hiring to his current employees.</p> <p>"When we have them out there talking about a career in law enforcement and the positives of it, and coming to work for Lakewood, that speaks volumes," Zaro said. "Because it's not just me selling something, it's their own friends and family telling them, consider law enforcement."</p> <p>That's what drew Johnson to the department.</p> <p>A friend explained that policing isn't always about crime.</p> <p>"I would say the police do more than I ever knew as a citizen," he said. "They just have a lot more involvement and with really important things like mental health."</p> <p>He and his wife also had a baby.</p> <p>If his job was going to take him away from his growing family, he wanted to believe it had the most value.</p> |

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| | <p>"I really wanted that supportive community in particular," Johnson said. "That was a huge thing for me moving into police work. When I'm away, I want to be on a path that I'm really enjoying. and so far, that's true for me."</p> <p>Yoshikawa also wanted a job where she could do the most good. "When I know I have teammates next to me doing the same thing with the same goal, I feel so much more motivated," she said.</p> <p>It's a feeling other departments are pushing as well, as they try to fill depleted ranks with people from new, diverse backgrounds.</p> <p>"I know it's a weird direction to go," Yokishowa said. "But I wouldn't change it."</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/05 King Co. sheriff goal: 100% staff in 3yrs |
| SOURCE | https://www.king5.com/article/entertainment/television/programs/new-day-northwest/king-county-sheriff-patti-cole-tindall/281-8859897b-6c91-4367-a5c2-59210ebce7a3 |
| GIST | <p>SEATTLE — King County Sheriff Patti Cole-Tindall has spent the last few months settling into her new role and removing the interim label. She became the first person of color to lead the department when she was named sheriff in May.</p> <p>Cole-Tindall isn't originally from Washington, but moved to the area as a junior in high school while her father served in the Air Force.</p> <p>She grew up watching her parents in public service careers and, after going through a divorce, she decided to pursue a career in law enforcement.</p> <p>Cole-Tindall looked at positions with the FBI and the Washington State Gambling Commission, but ultimately decided to stay local for her son, who was young at the time.</p> <p>She has worked in the sheriff's office for almost seven years in different roles and believes her non-traditional path makes her unique.</p> <p>"I have a much different perspective than someone who has been in the agency their entire career," Cole-Tindall told us.</p> <p>She said her triple threat experience working in labor, human relations, and law enforcement oversight with King County made her a unique candidate for the role.</p> <p>"We need to have people in law enforcement that represent the people in the community," Cole-Tindall said. "By being the first person of color to lead the King County Sheriff's Office, I hope it shows other people of color that they could do this too."</p> <p>Use of force in King County</p> <p>Sheriff Cole-Tindall was disappointed in recent King County audit numbers showing racial disparities in both arrests and use of force by deputies.</p> <p>"We are taking those results very seriously," she said.</p> <p>The sheriff's office plans to perform its own analysis and make changes upon confirming the results.</p> <p>King County deputies use very little force, according to Cole-Tindall. Over a three-year period, numbers show her deputies used force 619 times out of more than one million cases. Only four of those 619 use-of-force incidents were deemed inappropriate.</p> |

"I am proud of the work my folks do," Cole-Tindall said, "but if we do find problems, we will address them."

Her goals as sheriff

Cole-Tindall shared the three goals she plans to accomplish: improving transparency, changing morale in the department, and effective retention and recruitment.

To improve transparency to the public, the sheriff's office will continue to provide a use of force and internal affairs dashboard on their website for the community to see.

The sheriff's office also plans to create an advisory committee to provide feedback and ideas that will include members of the public.

Making the King County Sheriff's Office a place current employees want to be, as well as a place people want to come is another main priority for Cole-Tindall.

Leadership is sending out a weekly newsletter about what they're working on and it's had a great impact on morale, she said.

Right now, there are a large number of vacancies in the sheriff's office. Cole-Tindall said she wants to rebuild and re-establish relationships with the community, council, and current employees.

With their strategic recruiting plan, the department is on target to hire additional people to fill vacant positions. She hopes staffing numbers will be back up to 100% within the next three years.

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| HEADLINE | 08/05 Seattle Amazon Go closes: safety concerns |
| SOURCE | https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/amazon-go-downtown-seattle-close-safety-concerns/281-59774ef6-ca02-4d16-9581-b51cd771303f |
| GIST | <p>SEATTLE — Amazon is the latest business to close one of its stores over "safety concerns" in downtown Seattle.</p> <p>Amazon is temporarily closing its Amazon Go store at Fourth Avenue and Pike Street for "the safety of our store employees, customers, and third-party vendors."</p> <p>Six other Amazon Go stores throughout Seattle have not been slated to close and will remain open. Employees from the Fourth Avenue and Pike Street location have been offered opportunities at other nearby stores, according to Amazon.</p> <p>An Amazon spokesperson said the company hopes conditions improve in the area to reopen.</p> <p>Multiple other stores in downtown Seattle have closed their locations due to ongoing "safety concerns."</p> <p>Starbucks closed two "high-incident" locations on Fifth Avenue and on Pine Street on July 31 due to the ongoing crime concerns in the area.</p> <p>Seattle's popular Piroshky Piroshky Bakery closed its Third Avenue location "until further notice" over "countless safety concerns" in February.</p> <p>In March, King County Metro temporarily moved its bus stop at Third Avenue and Pine Street to another stop in partnership with the city's public safety efforts.</p> <p>Mayor Bruce Harrell called the situation along Third Avenue "completely unacceptable" in March.</p> |

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| | The Seattle Police Department has increased the number of officers in the area with six officers dedicated to Third Avenue alone, as well as, launching a mobile police precinct. |
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| HEADLINE | 08/06 Covid boosters: lackluster follow up rate |
| SOURCE | https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/covid-boosters-in-wa-what-to-know-at-this-stage-of-the-pandemic/ |
| GIST | <p>Filled with action figures, stickers and cartoons, Seattle Children’s COVID-19 vaccine clinic has kept busy for months, accommodating hundreds of immunization appointments per week. But staffers have noticed a glaring hole in their schedule recently: Fewer and fewer people are returning for booster shots.</p> <p>“Boosters have really been ramping down,” said Children’s nurse manager Emmeline Ong. “It’s been a while since we’ve gotten a lot of those appointments.”</p> <p>When boosters became available in Washington in September 2021, little was known about what new SARS-CoV-2 variants could emerge. Infection levels were on the decline after an explosion of summer delta cases, and the omicron variant hadn’t yet taken hold in the state.</p> <p>At the time, the additional doses were celebrated by public health officials and doctors as an extra, but optional, layer of protection for older adults and those who are immunocompromised.</p> <p>Nearly a year later, as the coronavirus has continued to evolve and develop new, more contagious subvariants, many experts are changing their tone around boosters — now thinking of them as an absolute necessity for protection against severe disease and death.</p> <p>Still, rates of booster shots are lagging across all age groups in Washington, but particularly among kids and teenagers, potentially setting the state up for another brutal round of COVID in upcoming months.</p> <p>“For some reason, there’s some complacency around vaccine boosters,” said Dr. Seth Cohen, medical director of infection prevention at UW Medical Center. “I’m personally very concerned about what the fall may have in store for us, and what effect decreased booster rates might have in the fall and winter.”</p> <p>On a recent weekday at Seattle Children’s, the hospital’s vaccine clinic was filled with families, but Shawna Millette and her two kids were one of the only ones in for a booster appointment.</p> <p>For Millette, a preschool teacher in Mountlake Terrace, the decision to get her children boosted was easy. Her family is traveling by plane soon, and she also wanted 9-year-old Sienna and 6-year-old Easton to be boosted in time for the new school year.</p> <p>“The booster is not fun,” said Millette, who was incapacitated by the virus in February 2020 and missed 16 days of work, unable to walk or eat much. “But it doesn’t matter. ... We just want to do our part to keep everyone safe,” she said after Sienna and Easton received their shots, with minimal tears.</p> <p>Washington state trends</p> <p>In Washington, about 57.7% of people eligible for a booster have received at least one additional dose — meaning more than 40% of the state’s eligible population has not, said Michele Roberts, the state’s assistant secretary for prevention and health who’s been leading COVID vaccine distribution efforts.</p> <p>Booster rates are higher among older adults, she said. But among 18- to 34-year-olds, 69.7% have completed their primary series, while only 43.3% have also received a booster shot. And while the majority of those 12 to 34 years old have received two doses of COVID vaccine, fewer than half of them have received a booster.</p> <p>Parents of younger children also seem to be more cautious around boosters and vaccines in general, Roberts said, adding that many want to “wait and see” how rollout goes.</p> |

“Children, regardless of age, are also at risk of severe disease from COVID,” said Dr. Ruth McDonald, chief medical operations officer at Seattle Children’s. “Of course those with underlying conditions are at higher risk, but we’ve seen that approximately a third — or 1 in 3 — of children hospitalized for COVID disease do not have any underlying risk factors.”

Roberts’ team has also continued to track booster disparities among racial and ethnic groups, with Asian and white populations reporting the highest rates at 65% and 62.2%, while Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and Hispanic populations have reported about 40% to 45%.

“There’s just not equal access,” Roberts said, pointing to people’s challenging work schedules, limited child care and ability to take time off for post-shot symptoms.

Because the state has pulled back on its mass vaccination sites due to “incredibly low” demand, she said, her team has recently relied more heavily on other more direct initiatives, like the Care-a-Van, a mobile COVID vaccination clinic that travels from county to county, prioritizing communities of color and those with less access to health care.

To date, the mobile clinic has doled out nearly 20,000 doses, including about 300 last weekend at community clinics from Ocean Park to Walla Walla. This week, the van is scheduled to visit at least 15 sites in the Tri-Cities, Walla Walla, Auburn, Maple Falls, Bellingham and Seattle.

“Many communities have rightfully had lack of trust in the health care system,” said Dr. Mark Del Beccaro, assistant deputy chief for COVID testing and immunization programs with Public Health – Seattle & King County. “So please talk to your trusted health care adviser or community leaders about what is going to be best for you.”

Booster timing

One of the most common questions patients have about boosters, according to Cohen at UW Medical Center, is whether they should hold off on getting one to see what updated versions might be available in the fall.

Generally, his response is simple: Get your booster as soon as possible.

For those 50 and older, those with compromised immune systems and people who are often around others or are planning to travel soon, boosters are “really a no-brainer,” he said. There might be some situations where it makes sense to hold off until the federal government approves an omicron-specific booster, he said, like if someone is at low-risk of developing severe disease or isn’t often in crowded, group settings, but he wouldn’t generally recommend waiting.

“Particularly with BA.5, being up-to-date with vaccines is more important than ever,” he said. “Two doses does not cut it with omicron.”

At the end of July, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced it was no longer considering authorizing a second booster for adults under 50 this summer, as some Biden administration officials and outside experts had previously suggested, The Associated Press reported.

Instead, the Food and Drug Administration is focusing on revamped vaccines for the fall that will target the more recent viral subvariants, marking a significant change. To date, all COVID immunizations in the U.S. have been based on the original version of the virus that began spreading across the country in early 2020.

The change comes in response to the rapid spread of BA.4 and BA.5, the two omicron subvariants that are more contagious than their predecessors and have pushed new daily cases in the U.S. above 125,000 and hospitalizations to 6,300. Those are the highest levels since February, though deaths have remained low, at about 360 per day.

While the White House has also emphasized that getting a fourth dose now won't impact a person's ability to get omicron-targeted shots once they're made available, how long it's been since their last dose will play a role in how soon they're eligible, according to the AP.

Details about the upcoming vaccine, however, are limited, Roberts said.

"We don't have info on timing, how many doses will be available and when they'll come," she said. "We also don't know the clinical recommendations yet [from the FDA and CDC]."

Because so much is still unknown, Roberts said it makes more sense for those eligible to get a booster dose now, before another potential fall or winter surge could hit the region.

"The more we can do now to prevent any of us needing hospital care, the better we're going to be able to do and maintain that capacity when there is an emergency and when people really need it," she said. "Yes, we're all going to be glad to get an omicron-specific booster, but any booster is going to help you right now against severe health outcomes."

County efforts

Significant differences in booster rates also exist depending on the county.

In Jefferson County — responsible for one of the highest booster rates in the state — public health teams have worked furiously to keep community vaccination efforts up, even when local infection levels dipped or plateaued.

Dr. Allison Berry, health officer in both Jefferson and Clallam counties, attributed part of the high demand to the county's demographics. In Jefferson County, 39% of people are 65 and older — compared to about 13.8% in King County — and were "interested right upfront" in boosters, Berry said.

When the omicron variant started to send more and more people to the hospital in January, Jefferson County was largely spared due, in part, to its high vaccination rates, Berry added.

As of last week, Jefferson County's booster rates were higher than the state's average in every age group, and more than 10% higher among those 65 and older. About 9.3 people per 100,000 are hospitalized for COVID there, compared to about 19.6 per 100,000 in Adams County and 22.9 per 100,000 in Pacific County — areas with some of the lowest booster rates in the state.

Jefferson County also maintained mass vaccination sites for boosters until February, much longer than in other parts of the state. The county brought on new hires to specifically handle COVID communications and consistently participated in regular Q&As on the county's local radio station, Berry said.

"We've wondered if we should scale our efforts back, but every time we do the weekly radio shows, we find people really listen," Berry said. "Schools and classrooms even listen in on Monday mornings."

Populations in her county also tend to be more politically liberal and vaccine confident, another huge factor in driving demand for boosters, she said.

"We just refuse to ever give up," she said. "In many communities, the booster has felt like an extra. It's really not."

Now, she has a simple clarification for her most of her patients: "If you're under 65, being up-to-date with COVID vaccines means three doses. If you're over 65, it's four."

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| SOURCE | https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/housing-shortage-has-spread-across-pacific-northwest-new-study-shows/ |
| GIST | <p>There simply aren't enough homes in the Seattle area. It's a long-standing problem here, as it is in other major coastal cities.</p> <p>But now, a new report finds that this problem has spread to parts of the country where, until recently, housing was more abundant and affordable, even in America's interior. And in the Northwest, it's not just an issue in the Seattle and Portland areas.</p> <p>The report includes 16 metro areas in Washington, Oregon and Idaho, and found that all 16 had a housing shortage in 2019.</p> <p>The report comes from Up for Growth, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit research group that advocates for an increase in housing supply. Researchers used data from the U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to estimate the number of housing units that exist in an area versus the number needed to meet demand.</p> <p>The scale of an area's housing shortage is not easy to quantify, and this report is a first of its kind. The report attempts to capture how many new households would need to be formed for the housing supply to be sufficient and allow people to avoid less than ideal living situations caused by high housing costs.</p> <p>That would mean, for example, the two roommates splitting a one-bedroom apartment, with one sleeping in the living room, would both be able to afford their own studio unit. Or, the adult who's living with parents to save on rent would be able to afford to move out.</p> <p>Some parts of the county still do have a surplus — in other words, there is enough housing to meet demand. But from 2012 to 2019, a slew of metro areas slid from a housing surplus to a housing shortage. And in many areas where a shortage already existed in 2012, it had only gotten worse by 2019.</p> <p>In nearly all 16 metro areas in Washington, Oregon and Idaho, the housing situation worsened from 2012 to 2019. And in five of these metro areas, a housing surplus in 2012 had vanished by 2019.</p> <p>The most dramatic turnaround was in Bend, Oregon, where a 2% surplus turned into an 8% shortage. Closer to Seattle, the Bremerton-Silverdale-Port Orchard metro in Kitsap County also saw its small 0.4% surplus sink to a 4% shortage.</p> <p>That's not much of a surprise. As home prices and rents soared in Seattle, Kitsap County became an attractive, less expensive alternative — and only a ferry ride away. But the influx of new residents from Seattle drove prices and rents up, creating a shortage.</p> <p>The Northwest's worst housing deficit was in Salem, Oregon. According to the report, Salem needed 13,000 more housing units than it had in 2019 — a little more than 10% of its total existing housing stock of 126,000 units.</p> <p>In the Seattle metro area, the report estimated a shortage of around 81,000 units in 2019, up from 41,500 in 2012. The 81,000 units pencils out to 5% of the 1.6 million existing units in our metro area, meaning we had a 5% shortage. In 2012, the shortage in Seattle was less than 3%.</p> <p>There are several reasons behind the underproduction of new housing units. For one, land and construction costs have increased significantly in the past decade. Local development fees and other government requirements, zoning laws and opposition to new construction from many homeowners have also hindered the creation of new housing.</p> <p>In two Washington metro areas — Yakima and Wenatchee — the housing shortage slightly decreased from 2012 to 2019.</p> |

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| | <p>The report captures the period before the pandemic. If anything, the situation has probably gotten worse since then. Demand for homes in many areas outside major cities surged during the pandemic, as remote work enabled some folks to live farther away from the office. Historically low interest rates also helped fuel demand.</p> <p>In a market with an ample supply of housing units, the median rents and home prices aren't so out of whack with median incomes, as they have long been in Seattle.</p> <p>Statewide, Washington had a deficit of 140,000 housing units in 2019, which represented 4.4% of the total existing housing stock. That ranked as the fifth-worst housing shortage, behind California, Colorado, Utah and Oregon, in that order.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/05 Pierce Co. real estate market cools |
| SOURCE | https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/business/real-estate-news/article264189566.html |
| GIST | <p>July's home sales numbers showed the real estate cool down continuing in terms of inventory and sales, particularly for Pierce County.</p> <p>The Northwest Multiple Listing Service, in its July report, listed Pierce County closed median sale price at \$575,000, up from \$568,575 in June and up 12.75 percent from a year ago.</p> <p>It's down from \$582,000 the county saw in May.</p> <p>King County's median closed sale price of \$890,000 was up slightly more than 2 percent from a year ago, and Snohomish County was at \$770,000, up 10 percent from 2021.</p> <p>Kitsap County was at \$538,000 for closed median sale price.</p> <p>The number of listings were up again in Pierce County, with more than 2,200 total active listings in July, up 111 percent from a year ago, and nearly 2 months' worth of inventory. The county's uptick in listings kicked in starting in February, the data show.</p> <p>A market slowdown was evident in July's numbers, as pending and closed sales were both down more than 20 percent from a year ago.</p> <p>John L. Scott Tacoma University Place broker Tim Bartlett responded to questions about the how the market is doing from his perspective, and said he's seen the cooling-off firsthand.</p> <p>"There is more hesitancy in today's market and buyers tend to spend a bit longer looking for properties than before," he told The News Tribune via email. "I have not heard of a local property in the last two to three weeks that has attracted multiple offers. This is due in part to interest rates ticking upward, as well as inflation and the overall economy."</p> <p>He added, "The \$400,000 to \$450,000 price range is traditionally a really hot segment of the market in Pierce County. Whereas many homes in this price range previously would attract numerous offers, most homes in this price range will sit on the market for 10 or so days before receiving an offer."</p> <p>John L. Scott Real Estate's Pierce County market analysis showed 64.7 percent of homes priced \$350,000-\$500,000 listed in June going under contract in the first 30 days. That compares with 49.5 percent for those \$500,000-\$750,000, 40 percent of those priced \$750,000-\$1 million and 37.6 percent for those \$1 million-\$1.5 million.</p> <p>For those listed in May, 77 percent of the \$350,000-\$500,000 were under contract in first 30 days, 67.9 percent for those \$500,000-\$750,000, 54 percent for the \$750,000-\$1 million homes and 52.9 percent for those \$1 million to \$1.5 million, according to the agency in its June recap.</p> |

For condos, the listings were up more than 66 percent from a year ago, with pending sales down more than 15 percent and closed sales down 18.75 percent. The median closed sale price was \$412,500, up more than 16 percent from 2021.

In comparison, King County's median closed sale price for condos was \$490,000 and \$500,000 in Snohomish County.

Some sellers are still receiving offers over their asking price, according to NWMLS in its Thursday release.

"Buyer and seller expectations have changed. It feels like things are starting to normalize a little," Dick Beeson, managing broker at RE/MAX Northwest Realtors in Gig Harbor, said in the release.

Despite the higher median price overall in July, he added that sellers "are starting to see that overpricing just ain't in the cards right now."

It's still possible to get more than your asking price. NWMLS noted, "Sellers in half the 26 counties accepted full price or above asking price offers. Based on the sales price to list price ratio, sellers of homes in Thurston County received 103.1 percent of their listing price to top the list."

It added, "The other 12 counties where homes sold at or above the list price were Chelan, Clark, Cowlitz, Franklin, King, Kitsap, Mason, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom."

John Deely, executive vice president of Coldwell Bank Bain, said in Thursday's release, "We are coming off the fevered pitch of a market that had tremendous velocity over the last few years. With listings starting to build again we are seeing a bit of a natural slowdown, yet still very much a seller's market."

Bartlett added that one particular segment was also keeping the local market active.

"Due to our proximity in Pierce County to two military bases, we often see service members looking to buy and sell," Bartlett said. "In my experience, these buyers have shown less hesitancy than traditional buyers."

He added, "We are still a ways away from a balanced or buyer's market."

For people wondering where they might find inventory available, Bartlett shared this: "I am seeing more opportunities for buyers with increased inventory on the Eastside of Tacoma, areas that are just west and east of I-5.

Additionally, buyers can find increased selection just north of Joint Base Lewis-McChord."

He added that inventory in North Tacoma and University Place "is still relatively low due to high demand."

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Cyber, Tech Awareness

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| HEADLINE | 08/05 FEMA: patch EAS but some flaws no patch |
| SOURCE | https://www.securityweek.com/fema-urges-patching-emergency-alert-systems-some-flaws-remain-unfixed |
| GIST | The US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has issued an advisory urging organizations to ensure that their emergency alert systems are patched, but a researcher says there are no patches for some of the vulnerabilities affecting these systems. |

The emergency alert system (EAS) in the United States enables authorities to broadcast emergency alerts and warning messages — such as weather and AMBER alerts — to the public over TV and radio.

FEMA warned this week in an Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) [advisory](#) that vulnerabilities affecting EAS encoder and decoder devices can allow hackers to issue unauthorized alerts over TV, radio and cable networks. This has been known to happen. In 2020, hackers exploited a vulnerable device to issue a [false warning of a radiological hazard](#).

The agency noted that Ken Pyle, a researcher at security and incident response firm Cybir, will disclose the vulnerabilities at the DEF CON conference taking place next week in Las Vegas.

Organizations have been urged to ensure that their systems have the most recent updates and security patches, that devices are protected by a firewall, and that the devices and supporting systems are monitored, with logs reviewed regularly for signs of compromise.

While the FEMA advisory does not name impacted products, Pyle told *SecurityWeek* that he conducted his research on the R189 DASDEC encoder/decoder from Digital Alert Systems, formerly Monroe Electronics. The researcher acquired the device from eBay.

He plans on showing at DEF CON that the devices are unencrypted, implemented poorly, they reuse keys, and their software is highly insecure, with web application vulnerabilities that put them at risk. The researcher says he has also obtained credentials and metadata on several EAS networks and providers as a result of his analysis.

Pyle also warns that many stations leave the affected devices exposed on the internet — as shown by a Shodan search — making it easier for hackers to exploit vulnerabilities.

The researcher started reporting vulnerabilities to Digital Alert Systems in 2019 and informed the company about some additional issues this year.

However, Pyle is not happy with Digital Alert Systems' vulnerability disclosure process. He says some of the flaws have been patched, but no CVE identifiers were assigned.

FEMA's alert suggests that installing the latest update on the EAS encoder can prevent abuse, but Pyle claims it does not, as there are problems that the vendor has not fixed or cannot fix, including issues related to practices, implementation and design.

The researcher says the vendor is downplaying the severity of his findings, but the company does not even have the full picture.

"I haven't fully disclosed all of my research to them due to lack of cooperation and communications," the researcher told *SecurityWeek*.

"They've said publicly that my work is old / outdated. It is not. I can prove this and will," he added.

Cybersecurity researchers have been finding [vulnerabilities in EAS products from Digital Alert Systems](#) for at least a decade.

SecurityWeek has reached out to the company for comment and will update this article if it responds.

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| HEADLINE | 08/07 NKorea hackers fake Coinbase job offers |
| SOURCE | https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/north-korean-hackers-target-crypto-experts-with-fake-coinbase-job-offers/ |

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| GIST | <p>A new social engineering campaign by the notorious North Korean Lazarus hacking group has been discovered, with the hackers impersonating Coinbase to target employees in the fintech industry.</p> <p>A common tactic the hacking group uses is to approach targets over LinkedIn to present a job offer and hold a preliminary discussion as part of a social engineering attack.</p> <p>According to Hossein Jazi, a security researcher at Malwarebytes who has been following Lazarus activity closely since February 2022, the threat actors are now pretending to be from Coinbase, targeting candidates suitable for the role of "Engineering Manager, Product Security."</p> <p>Coinbase is one of the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange platforms, allowing Lazarus to lay the ground for a lucrative and enticing job offer at a prestigious organization.</p> <p>When victims download what they believe to be a PDF about the job position, they are actually getting a malicious executable using a PDF icon. In this case, the file is named "Coinbase_online_careers_2022_07.exe," which will display the decoy PDF document shown below when executed while also loading a malicious DLL.</p> <p>Once executed, the malware will use GitHub as a command and control server to receive commands to perform on the infected device.</p> <p>This attack chain is similar to one documented by Malwarebytes in a blog post at the start of the year. Jazi told Bleeping Computer that Lazarus follows similar tactics and methods to infect their targets with malware, and the individual phishing campaigns feature infrastructure overlaps.</p> <p>Other campaigns conducted by Lazarus in the past using fake job offers were for General Dynamics and Lockheed Martin.</p> <p>Lazarus hackers targeting crypto</p> <p>State-sponsored North Korean hacking groups are known for launching financially motivated attacks against banks, cryptocurrency exchanges, NFT marketplaces, and individual investors with significant holdings.</p> <p>Earlier in the year, U.S. intelligence services warned about Lazarus spreading trojanized cryptocurrency wallets and investment apps that steal people's private keys and siphon their holdings.</p> <p>In April, the U.S. Treasury and the FBI linked stolen cryptocurrency from the blockchain-based game Axie Infinity to Lazarus, holding them responsible for stealing over \$617 million worth of Ethereum and USDC tokens.</p> <p>As revealed later, in July, the Axie Infinity hack was made possible thanks to a laced PDF file that supposedly contained the details of a lucrative job offer sent to one of the blockchain's engineers.</p> <p>Opening the file infected the engineer's computer, enabling Lazarus to raise their privileges and move laterally in the firm's network, eventually locating a vulnerability in the Ronin Bridge and triggering an exploit.</p> <p>This same type of attack is likely what Lazarus is hoping to achieve in the latest Coinbase-lured campaign, as it would only take a single person in a company to open the PDF and enable the hackers to gain initial access to the corporate network.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/05 Prolific malware: old strains, modern twist |
| SOURCE | https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/ransomware/the-most-prolific-malware-strains-of-2021-are-yesterdays-news-with-a-modern-twist |

The most popular strains of malware in 2021 were dominated by old characters with new twists, according to the U.S. and Australian governments.

In a joint [publication](#) released this week, the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and the Australian Cyber Security Centre laid out 11 of the most prolific malware strains tormenting businesses, governments and critical infrastructure last year. They include trojan malware like the credential and information-stealing [Agent Tesla](#), [AZORult](#), [Formbook](#), [LokiBot](#), [NanoCore](#), as well as backdoor trojans like [Remcos](#) and the multi-purpose [Trickbot](#) hacking tool.

All of those strains have been in circulation for at least five years, while two others on the list — Qakbot and Ursnif — have been used in hacking campaigns for more than a decade. The agencies say their enduring effectiveness over the years and their domination of 2021 can largely be attributed to the way cyber criminal actors have worked to modify, alter or re-use the same exploits to evade detection and infect new hosts.

“Updates made by malware developers, and reuse of code from these malware strains, contribute to the malware’s longevity and evolution into multiple variations,” the U.S. and Australian cyber agencies wrote, adding the silver lining that “malicious actors’ use of known malware strains offers organizations opportunities to better prepare, identify, and mitigate attacks from these known malware strains.”

[Qakbot](#) and Trickbot are both part of larger botnets that are used to hijack devices that can later be used as malware delivery vehicles to further infect other machines and gain initial access into organizations that can later be leveraged by ransomware actors and other cybercriminal organizations for more substantial compromises. [Trickbot](#) in particular has been associated by multiple threat intelligence organizations as an initial access route for the Conti ransomware gang, which U.S. government reporting attributed to more than 450 ransomware attacks in 2021.

The developers of these malware strains sit at the front-end of a cybercriminal ecosystem whereby they continually tweak their existing malware which goes to distributors and brokers who, in turn, sell them to end-users looking to leverage the malware in ongoing hacking campaigns.

This work is highly lucrative and — because many developers operate from Russia or other countries outside of U.S. or allied legal jurisdiction — comparatively low-risk.

The Biden administration spent its first year in office engaging with the Russian government, up to and including [phone calls](#) between presidents Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin, that specifically focused on ransomware and other [cybercriminal groups operating freely within Russian borders](#). Those warnings did not lead to a measurable decrease in ransomware attacks from groups from Russian hacking groups.

In January 2022, a month before the invasion of Ukraine, Russian law enforcement authorities conducted arrests and raids for members of the REvil ransomware gang. At the time, it was [widely interpreted](#) as an attempt to head off damaging sanctions and other actions by the U.S. and Western governments in response to the invasion, which U.S. intelligence had been publicly forecasting for months.

The arrests represented “a signal to the United States that this is the type of actions the Russians are capable of taking if they choose to, and one they won’t take if there is significant sanctions against the Russian economy for Ukraine,” said Dmitri Alperovitch, founder of the Silverado Policy Accelerator and a former chief technology officer of CrowdStrike, in January.

CISA and the Australian CSC said that organizations operating critical infrastructure should take a number of actions in the short term, like keeping software regularly patched (preferably through CISA’s [Known Exploited Vulnerabilities](#) catalog) implementing multifactor authentication, securing and monitoring remote desktop protocol and risky services that grant high-level access, having data backups in place and conducting user trainings around phishing and other tactics that often serve as entry points to larger infections.

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| | Over the long term, protections like micro-segmentation may be warranted, as the CSC “has observed ransomware and data theft incidents in which Australian divisions of multinational companies were impacted by ransomware incidents affecting assets maintained and hosted by offshore divisions outside their control.” |
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| HEADLINE | 08/06 Twitter breach anonymous account users |
| SOURCE | https://www.securityweek.com/twitter-breach-exposed-anonymous-account-owners |
| GIST | <p>A vulnerability in Twitter’s software that exposed an undetermined number of owners of anonymous accounts to potential identity compromise last year was apparently exploited by a malicious actor, the social media company said Friday.</p> <p>It did not confirm a report that data on 5.4 million users was offered for sale online as a result but said users worldwide were affected.</p> <p>The breach is especially worrisome because many Twitter account owners, including human rights activists, do not disclose their identities in their profiles for security reasons that include fear of persecution by repressive authorities.</p> <p>“This is very bad for many who use pseudonymous Twitter accounts,” U.S. Naval Academy data security expert Jeff Kosseff tweeted.</p> <p>The vulnerability allowed someone to determine during log-in whether a particular phone number or email address was tied to an existing Twitter account, thereby revealing account owners, the company said.</p> <p>Twitter said it did not know how many users may have been affected, and stressed that no passwords were exposed.</p> <p>“We can confirm the impact was global,” a Twitter spokesperson said via email. “We cannot determine exactly how many accounts were impacted or the location of the account holders.”</p> <p>Twitter’s acknowledgment in a blog post Friday followed a report last month by the digital privacy advocacy group Restore Privacy detailing how data presumably obtained from the vulnerability was being sold on a popular hacking forum for \$30,000.</p> <p>A security researcher discovered the flaw in January, informed Twitter and was paid a reported \$5,000 bounty. Twitter said the bug, introduced in a June 2021 software update, was immediately fixed.</p> <p>Twitter said it learned about the data sale on the hacking forum from media reports and “confirmed that a bad actor had taken advantage of the issue before it was addressed.”</p> <p>It said it was directly notifying all account owners that it can confirm were affected.</p> <p>“We are publishing this update because we aren’t able to confirm every account that was potentially impacted, and are particularly mindful of people with pseudonymous accounts who can be targeted by state or other actors,” the company said.</p> <p>It recommended users seeking to keep their identities veiled not add a publicly known phone number or email address to their Twitter account.</p> <p>“If you operate a pseudonymous Twitter account, we understand the risks an incident like this can introduce and deeply regret that this happened,” it said.</p> <p>The revelation of the breach comes while Twitter is in a legal battle with Tesla CEO Elon Musk over his attempt to back out from his previous offer to buy San Francisco-based Twitter for \$44 billion.</p> |

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| HEADLINE | 08/05 UN: NKorea cybercrime revenue stream |
| SOURCE | https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/cybercrime-revenue-stream-north/ |
| GIST | <p>North Korea stole hundreds of millions of dollars worth of crypto assets in at least one major hack, according to a confidential United Nations (UN) report seen by Reuters on Thursday.</p> <p>The document also reportedly suggests the US previously accused North Korea of carrying out cyber-attacks to fund its nuclear and missile programs.</p> <p>"Other cyber activity focusing on stealing information and more traditional means of obtaining information and materials of value to [Democratic People's Republic of Korea]'s prohibited programs, including [...] weapons of mass destruction, continued," the document read.</p> <p>For context, North Korea has been banned by the UN Security Council from conducting nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches for years. However, the document seen by <i>Reuters</i> suggests the country made preparations for a nuclear test during the first half of 2022.</p> <p>"The latest report from the United Nations on North Korean nuclear tests should sound the klaxon of alarm for Western businesses, especially as it specifically mentions cyber-attacks being a key source of funding," explained Kevin Bocek, VP of security strategy and threat intelligence at Venafi.</p> <p>The executive says that, according to data gathered by Venafi in June, it is evident the proceeds of cyber-criminal activities from groups such as Lazarus and APT38 are being used to circumvent international sanctions in North Korea.</p> <p>"This money is being funneled directly into weapons programs. And because developing nuclear weapons is expensive, especially in the face of rising inflation and the cryptocurrency crash, companies should be on high alert that the DPRK will be looking to cash in now and help feed their weapons programs and fund ongoing weapon development," Bocek added.</p> <p>Additionally, the security expert mentioned code signing machine identities as a key component of North Korean nation-state attacks.</p> <p>"Incidents such as the 2014 Sony Hack, or the \$101m heist of the Bangladesh Bank via the SWIFT banking system, have demonstrated North Korea's long-standing interest in the malicious use of machine identities," Bocek explained.</p> <p>"While the latest UN report is an important step in broadcasting this issue to the world, we still need to see governments and businesses act together and share intelligence on these attacks. This will be key to building knowledge on the importance of machine identities in security. If not, we'll continue to see North Korean threat actors thrive."</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/06 Chinese adult site leaking user details |
| SOURCE | https://www.hackread.com/chinese-adult-site-leaking-14-million-user-details/ |
| GIST | <p>Hjedd, an infamous Chinese adult content and NSFW platform has been exposing a treasure trove of user data online since at least July 2022. This was discovered by independent security researcher Anurag Sen who confirmed to Hackread.com that the server is still exposed and publicly accessible without any security authentication or password.</p> <p>For your information, a database or server exposed without security authentication means anyone with a slight bit of knowledge about finding unsecured databases on Shodan and other such platforms can have complete access to Hjedd's user data.</p> |

According to Sen and as seen by Hackread.com, the exposed data includes the following:

- Usernames
- Nicknames
- Phone Numbers
- Member Details
- Users' Comments
- Email Addresses
- Bcrypt Hashed Passwords
- Login Ip address and details
- Messages between Users revealing Private contents

At the time of writing, Hackread.com can confirm that the leaky server comprises details of over 14 million users with more than 24 GB worth of records.

What's worse, the data is being frequently updated with details of new and already registered users.

Damage is Already Done

Sen alerted Hjedd on several occasions but the company has so far failed to respond or secure its server. However, Hackread.com can confirm that cyber criminals have already found their way to the server and leaked the database (apparently with 13.4 million users' accounts) on a hacker forum which surfaced as an alternative to popular and [now-sized Raidforums](#).

Potential Threat

According to the researcher, the information stored in this database is vulnerable to spam marketing and phishing campaigns. Leaving information like username, email, and Mobile number.

Also, its effects may cause physical damage. It can cause revealing identities for the forum members. The leaked passwords, on the other hand, are hashed but they can be matched with encrypted hashes of the password list to find the plain text password for the accounts.

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| HEADLINE | 08/05 New Android malware by APT hackers |
| SOURCE | https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/facebook-finds-new-android-malware-used-by-apt-hackers/ |
| GIST | <p>Meta (Facebook) has released its Q2 2022 adversarial threat report, and among the highlights is the discovery of two cyber-espionage clusters connected to hacker groups known as 'Bitter APT' and APT36 (aka 'Transparent Tribe') using new Android malware.</p> <p>These cyberspying operatives use social media platforms like Facebook to collect intelligence (OSINT) or to befriend victims using fake personas and then drag them to external platforms to download malware.</p> <p>Both APT36 and Bitter APT were observed orchestrating cyber-espionage campaigns earlier this year, so Facebook's report gives a new dimension to their recent activities.</p> <p>The Pakistan-aligned state-sponsored actor APT36 was recently exposed in a campaign targeting the Indian government using MFA-bypassing tools.</p> <p>The Bitter APT was also observed in May 2022, targeting the government of Bangladesh with a new malware that featured remote file execution capabilities.</p> <p>Bitter APT using new Android spyware</p> <p>Meta's report explains that Bitter APT engaged in social engineering against targets in New Zealand, India, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom, using lengthy interactions and investing significant time and effort.</p> <p>The group's goal was to infect its targets with malware, and for this purpose, it used a combination of URL shortening services, compromised sites, and third-party file hosting providers.</p> |

"This group has aggressively responded to our detection and blocking of its activity and domain infrastructure," comments Meta in the report.

"For example, Bitter would attempt to post broken links or images of malicious links so that people would have to type them into their browser rather than click on them — all in an attempt to unsuccessfully evade enforcement."

Bitter's recent attacks also revealed additions in the threat actor's arsenal in the form of two mobile apps, targeting iOS and Android users, respectively.

The iOS version was a chat app delivered via Apple's Testflight service, a testing space for app developers. Typically, threat actors convince victims to download these chat apps by presenting them as "safer" or "more secure."

The Android app discovered by Facebook is a new malware that Meta named 'Dracarys,' which abuses accessibility services to give itself increased permissions without the user's consent.

From there, it would inject itself into various Android apps to act as spyware, stealing text messages, installing apps, and recording audio.

"Bitter injected Dracarys into trojanized (non-official) versions of YouTube, Signal, Telegram, WhatsApp, and custom chat applications capable of accessing call logs, contacts, files, text messages, geolocation, device information, taking photos, enabling microphone, and installing apps," explained Meta's report.

Meta underscores that Dracarys passes undetected on all existing anti-virus engines, highlighting Bitter's capabilities to create stealthy custom malware.

APT36 relies on commodity tools

APT36 is a much less sophisticated threat actor, yet still, a potent threat that relies on intricate social engineering tactics and readily available malware.

The latest activity discovered by Meta targeted people in Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia, focusing specifically on military officials and human rights activists.

Members of APT36 created accounts on Facebook posing as recruiters for spoofed or fictitious firms and used the WeTransfer file sharing service to send supposed job offers to their targets.

The downloaded files contained a modified version of XploitSPY, which Meta named 'LazaSpy.' The actor's modifications include a failed implementation of a geo-restricted targeting mechanism.

Apart from LazaSpy, APT36 also employed Mobzsar, a commodity malware that enables operators to access call logs, contact lists, SMS, GPS data, photos, and the microphone.

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| HEADLINE | 08/05 UK NHS outage after MSP cyberattack |
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| SOURCE | https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/uk-nhs-suffers-outage-after-cyberattack-on-managed-service-provider/ |
| GIST | <p>United Kingdom's National Health Service (NHS) 111 emergency services are affected by a significant and ongoing outage triggered by a cyberattack that hit the systems of British managed service provider (MSP) Advanced.</p> <p>Advanced's Adastra client patient management solution, which is used by 85% of NHS 111 services, has been hit by a major outage together with several other services provided by the MSP, according to a status page.</p> |

"There is a major outage of a computer system that is used to refer patients from NHS 111 Wales to out-of-hours GP providers," the Welsh Ambulance Services [said today](#).

"This system is used by Local Health Boards to coordinate these services for patients. The ongoing outage is significant and has been far-reaching, impacting each of the four nations in the UK."

The UK public is advised to access the NHS 111 emergency services using the online platform until the incident is resolved.

Cyberattack confirmed by Advanced COO

While public access to Advanced's status page is now blocked by a login form allowing access only to customers and employees, Advanced's Chief Operating Officer Simon Short confirmed that the incident was caused by a cyberattack detected on Thursday morning.

"A security issue was identified yesterday, which resulted in loss of service," Short said in a statement shared with the [BBC](#).

"We can confirm that the incident is related to a cyber-attack and as a precaution, we immediately isolated all our health and care environments.

"Early intervention from our Incident Response Team contained this issue to a small number of servers representing 2% of our Health & Care infrastructure."

While no details were provided regarding the nature of the cyberattack, based on the wording, it is likely that this was a ransomware or data extortion attack.

Advanced provides business software to more than 22,000 global customers in various industry verticals, from healthcare and education to non-profits.

The MSP's list of customers includes the NHS, the UK Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), and the London City Airport.

A spokesperson for Advanced was not immediately available for comment when contacted by BleepingComputer earlier today for more details.

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| HEADLINE | 08/05 Twitter confirms zero-day in data breach |
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| SOURCE | https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/twitter-confirms-zero-day-used-to-expose-data-of-54-million-accounts/ |
| GIST | <p>Twitter has confirmed a recent data breach was caused by a now-patched zero-day vulnerability used to link email addresses and phone numbers to users' accounts, allowing a threat actor to compile a list of 5.4 million user account profiles.</p> <p>Last month, BleepingComputer spoke to a threat actor who said that they were able to create a list of 5.4 million Twitter account profiles using a vulnerability on the social media site.</p> <p>This vulnerability allowed anyone to submit an email address or phone number, verify if it was associated with a Twitter account, and retrieve the associated account ID. The threat actor then used this ID to scrape the public information for the account.</p> <p>This allowed the threat actor to create profiles of 5.4 million Twitter users in December 2021, including a verified phone number or email address, and scraped public information, such as follower counts, screen name, login name, location, profile picture URL, and other information.</p> |

At the time, the threat actor was selling the data for \$30,000 and had told BleepingComputer that there were interested buyers.

BleepingComputer later learned that two different threat actors purchased the data for less than the original selling price and that the data would likely be released for free in the future.

Twitter confirms zero-day used to collect data

Today, Twitter has confirmed that the vulnerability used by the threat actor in December is the same one [reported to and fixed by them](#) in January 2022 as part of their HackerOne bug bounty program.

"In January 2022, we received a report through our bug bounty program of a vulnerability that allowed someone to identify the email or phone number associated with an account or, if they knew a person's email or phone number, they could identify their Twitter account, if one existed," Twitter disclosed in a [security advisory](#) today.

"This bug resulted from an update to our code in June 2021. When we learned about this, we immediately investigated and fixed it. At that time, we had no evidence to suggest someone had taken advantage of the vulnerability."

As part of today's disclosure, Twitter told BleepingComputer that they have already begun to send out notifications this morning to alert impacted users about whether the data breach exposed their phone number or email address.

At this time, Twitter tells us that they cannot determine the exact number of people impacted by the breach. However, the threat actor claims to have used the flaw to gather the data of 5,485,636 Twitter users.

While no passwords were exposed in this breach, Twitter is encouraging users to enable 2-factor authentication on their accounts to prevent unauthorized logins as a security measure.

For those using a pseudonymous Twitter account, the social media company suggests you keep your identity as anonymous as possible by not using a publicly known phone number or email address on your Twitter account.

"We are publishing this update because we aren't able to confirm every account that was potentially impacted, and are particularly mindful of people with pseudonymous accounts who can be targeted by state or other actors," warned the Twitter advisory.

Furthermore, as two different threat actors have already purchased this data, users should be on the lookout for targeted spear-phishing campaigns utilizing this data to steal your Twitter login credentials.

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| HEADLINE | 08/05 Stolen data give attackers 2FA advantage |
| SOURCE | https://www.darkreading.com/cloud/stolen-data-attackers-advantage-text-based-2fa |
| GIST | <p>Companies that rely on texts for a second factor of authentication are putting about 20% of their customers at risk because the information necessary to attack the system is available in compromised databases for sale on the Dark Web.</p> <p>About 1 billion records synthesized from online databases — representing about one in every five mobile phone users in the world — contain users' names, email addresses, passwords, and phone numbers. This gives attackers everything they need to conduct SMS-based phishing attacks, also known as smishing, says Thomas Olofsson, CTO of cybersecurity firm FYEO.</p> <p>Cybersecurity experts have long known that the addition of an SMS one-time password is a weak form of two-factor authentication and the simplest form of two-factor authentication for attackers to compromise.</p> |

However, combining such attacks with the readily available information on users produces a "perfect storm" for attacking accounts, he says.

At Black Hat USA, Olofsson plans to go over findings from research into the problem during a [session](#) on Wednesday, Aug. 10, called "Smishmash — Text-Based 2FA Spoofing Using OSINT, Phishing Techniques, and a Burner Phone."

"The research that we have done is two parts: How do you bypass 2FA, and how many phone numbers can we tie to an email address and a password," he tells Dark Reading. "So, for about one in five — a billion — people, we can connect your email address to your phone number, and that is really bad."

The analysis found that by collecting information from known databases of compromised usernames and passwords, researchers could create a database of 22 billion credentials. Linking those credentials to a phone number reduced the exposure to a bit more than 1 billion records, of which about half have been verified.

To make use of those records, attackers can conduct an adversary-in-the-middle attack, where the smishing attack goes to a proxy. When a targeted user opens a link in a malicious SMS message on a mobile device, browsers on iOS and Android rarely show any security information, such as the URL, since screen real estate is so small. Because of that, few — if any — signs of the attack are presented to the user, making the attacks much more effective, Olofsson says.

In addition, smishing attacks are seven times more likely to succeed than phishing attacks conducted through email, he says.

"It makes it extremely likely that someone will click on the link," Olofsson says. "I even look at our attacks, and I said, wow, I could fall for this."

Attackers have used smishing to compromise financial accounts — especially those linked to cryptocurrency exchanges — during the past two years, with more than \$1.6 billion of crypto stolen so far in 2022, according to [an analysis published in May](#).

SMS for 2FA: Risky Biz

Meanwhile, the US federal government has already put additional restrictions on any use of SMS for a second factor of authentication. In 2016, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) warned against using one-time passwords sent as text messages for a second factor to authenticate users.

"An SMS sent from a mobile phone might seamlessly switch to an internet message delivered to, say, a Skype or Google Voice phone number. Users shouldn't have to know the difference when they hit send — that's part of the Internet's magic. But it does matter for security," NIST [wrote in an explanation of the policy](#), adding: "While a password coupled with SMS has a much higher level of protection relative to passwords alone, it doesn't have the strength of device authentication mechanisms inherent in the other authenticators allowable" by NIST guidelines.

To make it less likely that such attacks succeed, users should ignore any notifications that come through SMS and instead log directly into their account.

"Never trust an SMS message," Olofsson says. "If you feel something is wrong, don't click on it, don't trust it. Go on a computer, and see if you have an e-mail, because at least you can verify the headers then."

Unfortunately, many financial institutions and other companies make it hard for users to implement better security because they only offer SMS as an option for the second factor of authentication. Adding reCAPTCHA checks can give users a hint that something is wrong, Olofsson notes, because any adversary-in-the-middle attack will display the proxy server, not the user's IP address.

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| HEADLINE | 08/05 Underground economy booming |
| SOURCE | https://www.darkreading.com/risk/ransomware-explosion-thriving-dark-web-ecosystem |
| GIST | <p>The underground economy is booming — fomented by a surging and evolving ransomware sector. The Dark Web now has hundreds of thriving marketplaces where a wide variety of professional ransomware products and services can be had at a variety of price points.</p> <p>Researchers from Venafi and Forensic Pathways analyzed some 35 million Dark Web URLs — including forums and marketplaces — between November 2021 and March 2022 and uncovered 475 webpages filled with listings for ransomware strains, ransomware source code, build and custom-development services, and full-fledged ransomware-as-a-service (RaaS) offerings.</p> <p>A Plethora of Ransomware Tools</p> <p>The researchers identified 30 different ransomware families listed for sale on the pages, and found ads for well-known variants such as DarkSide/BlackCat, Babuk, Egregor, and GoldenEye that previously have been associated with attacks on high-profile targets. The prices for these proven attack tools tended to be significantly higher than lesser-known variants.</p> <p>For instance, a customized version of DarkSide — the ransomware used in the Colonial Pipeline attack — was priced at \$1,262, compared with some variants that were available for as low \$0.99. The source code for Babuk ransomware, meanwhile, was listed at \$950, while that for the Paradise variant sold for \$593.</p> <p>"It's likely that other hackers will be buying ransomware source code to modify it and create their own variations, in a similar way to a developer using an open source solution and modifying it to suit their company's needs," says Kevin Bocek, vice president of security strategy and threat intelligence at Venafi.</p> <p>The success that threat actors have had with variants such as Babuk, which was used in an attack on the Washington, DC, police department last year, make the source code more appealing, Bocek says. "So you can see why a threat actor would want to use the strain as the foundation for developing their own ransomware variant."</p> <p>No Experience Necessary</p> <p>Venafi researchers found that in many instances, the tools and services available through these marketplaces — including step-by-step tutorials — are designed to allow attackers with minimal technical skills and experience to launch ransomware attacks against victims of their choice.</p> <p>"The research found that ransomware strains can be purchased outright on the Dark Web, but also that some 'vendors' offer additional services like tech support and paid add-ons such as unkillable processes for ransomware attacks, as well as tutorials," Bocek says.</p> <p>Other vendors have reported on the growing use among ransomware actors of initial access services, for gaining a foothold on a target network. Initial access brokers (IABs) are threat actors that sell access to a previously compromised network to other threat actors.</p> <p>Initial Access Brokers Thrive in the Underground Economy</p> <p>A study by Intel471 earlier this year found a growing nexus between ransomware actors and IABs. Among the most active players in this space are Jupiter, a threat actor that was seen offering access to as many as 1,195 compromised networks in the first quarter of the year; and Neptune, which listed more than 1,300 access credentials for sale in the same time frame.</p> <p>Ransomware operators that Intel471 spotted using these services included Avaddon, Pysa/Mespinoza, and BlackCat.</p> <p>Often the access is provided via compromised Citrix, Microsoft Remote Desktop, and Pulse Secure VPN credentials. Trustwave's SpiderLabs, which keeps tabs on prices for various products and services on the Dark Web, describes VPN credentials as the most expensive records in underground forums. According to</p> |

the vendor, [prices for VPN access can go as high as \\$5,000](#) — and even higher — depending on the kind of organization and access it provides.

"I expect to see a ransomware rampage carry on as it has done for the last few years," Bocek says. "The [abuse of machine identities](#) will also see ransomware move from infecting individual systems, to taking over entire services, such as a cloud service or a network of IoT devices."

A Fragmented Landscape

Meanwhile, another study released this week — a midyear threat report by Check Point — shows the ransomware landscape is littered with considerably more players than generally perceived. Check Point researchers analyzed data from the company's incident response engagements and found that while some ransomware variants — such as Conti, Hive, and Phobos — were more common than other variants, they did not account for a majority of attacks. In fact, 72% of the ransomware incidents that Check Point engineers responded to involved a variant they had encountered only once previously.

"This suggests that contrary to some assumptions, the ransomware landscape is not dominated by only a few large groups, but is actually a [fragmented ecosystem](#) with multiple smaller players that are not as well-publicized as the larger groups," according to the report.

Check Point — like Venafi — characterized ransomware as continuing to present the biggest risk to enterprise data security, as it has for the past several years. The security vendor's report highlighted campaigns like Conti group's ransomware attacks on Costa Rica (and subsequently on Peru) earlier this year as examples of how significantly threat actors have broadened their targeting, in pursuit of financial gain.

Big Ransomware Fish May Go Belly Up

Several of the larger ransomware groups have grown to a point where they employ hundreds of hackers, have revenues in the hundreds of millions of dollars, and are able to invest in things like R&D teams, quality assurance programs, and specialist negotiators. Increasingly, larger ransomware groups have begun to acquire nation-state actor capabilities, Check Point warns.

At the same time, the widespread attention that such groups have begun to garner from governments and law enforcement will likely encourage them to maintain a low profile, Check Point says. The US government, for example, has offered a [\\$10 million reward](#) for information leading to Conti members being identified and/or apprehended, and \$5 million for groups caught using Conti. The heat is thought to have contributed to a Conti group decision earlier this year to [cease operations](#).

"There will be a lesson learned from the Conti ransomware group," Check Point says in its report. "Its size and power garnered too much attention and became its downfall. Going forward, we believe there will be many small-medium groups instead of a few large ones, so that they can go under the radar more easily."

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| HEADLINE | 08/05 Genesis IAB market polish to dark web |
| SOURCE | https://www.darkreading.com/endpoint/genesis-iab-market-polish-dark-web |
| GIST | <p>The growing role of so-called initial access brokers (IABs) in the underground cybercrime economy is reflected in evolution of Genesis Marketplace, one of the earliest full-fledged markets for IABs, which has grown more sophisticated and polished over time.</p> <p>A report this week from Sophos takes a comprehensive look at Genesis, which started in 2017 and offers malicious actors access to other people's data, from credentials and cookies to digital fingerprints, through its invitation-only marketplace.</p> <p>Genesis currently lists more than 400,000 bots (compromised systems) in more than 200 nations, with Italy, France, and Spain topping the list of affected countries.</p> |

The market provides not just the data itself but well-maintained tools to facilitate that data's (mis)use. Those tools extend to bespoke anti-detection offerings that help its clients stay under the radar when deploying stolen credentials to access targeted bots — including a Google Chrome extension and even a "continually maintained and upgraded" Genesium browser on offer.

"Most attackers, especially less-experienced ones, do not want to waste time or effort on the reconnaissance and infiltration phases of an attack," explains Sophos threat researcher Angela Gunn. "The maturity of Genesis, both the ease of use and the serious-inquiries-only vibe that come with restricted access, speaks to not wasting time or effort."

The service is defined by the high quality level of data on offer, as well as the site's commitment to keeping stolen info up to date.

This means hackers who pay for stolen information are kept abreast by Genesis of when that information changes or gets updated. Users are charged an according rate based on the volume of information it has on the targeted bot.

"For instance, the single set of credentials that led to the June 2021 [EA data breach](#), which famously allowed the attackers into EA's system through the gaming giant's Slack, were purchased on Genesis for \$10," according to the report.

Genesis also offers its clientele a level of customer service and user interface (UI) polish that Sophos describes as "far from the old days of 1337sp34k and Matrix-wannabe interfaces." This includes a slick, contemporary interface, a page of frequently asked questions (FAQs), and multilingual tech support.

Returning users also have access to a dashboard with updated information about the compromised systems they've tapped into.

"The fact that Genesis actually has a customer-service function is a statement that bolsters the operation's seriousness," Gunn points out.

IABs Get More Professional as Demand Rises

The evolution of Genesis points to the "growing professionalization and specialization" of the cybercrime economy, the report notes.

[Ransomware groups and affiliates](#) are assumed to be the service's most frequent customers, particularly criminals who are looking for an IAB site that gives them expedited access and faster lateral movement to their targets.

Gunn explains that the "Dark Web" — which of course is not just one thing — has been professionalizing for a while now.

"Applicant vetting, robust search, tech support, developers, and designers — that work doesn't happen for free," she adds. "Paying for that work evidences just how high the profits are in this realm."

A high level of organization also distinguishes the Genesis market, giving malicious actors more contextual information surrounding stolen data, and allowing them greater insights into the compromised systems. This could in fact spur even more inventive attack vectors.

"For instance, a darknet manual that we found during a recent investigation suggests to other criminals that they use complementary data from Genesis for kicking victims out of their accounts if stolen credentials are no longer valid," according to the report.

This means that even if victims attempt to neutralize the threat of stolen credentials, attackers can use the complementary data to actively extort affected users.

The Velvet Rope Treatment

Adding to the air of exclusivity and sophistication is the service's invite-only accessibility, which has resulted in a smaller cybercrime ecosystem of fake sites promising access to Genesis and requiring gullible criminals to make a "deposit" with a credit card to access it.

In November 2021, Digital Shadows, which has been tracking IABs since 2016, [reported](#) an increase in the use of IABs among cybercriminals.

Gunn says if organizations want to avoid landing on the IAB auction block, they first must patch all vulnerabilities, keep their systems in order, and stay vigilant.

"Even if IABs are a newer development in the threat landscape, the processes of recon and infiltration are nothing new," she adds. "Organizations should have a detection strategy in place to recognize those unusual activities, but also you need to understand your network, what's on it, what the potential attack surfaces are, and where to prioritize patching accordingly."

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| HEADLINE | 08/05 GwisinLocker ransomware targets SKorea |
| SOURCE | https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/gwisinlocker-ransomware-linux/?&web_view=true |
| GIST | <p>ReversingLabs researchers discovered a new ransomware family targeting Linux-based systems in South Korea. Dubbed GwisinLocker, the malware was detected by ReversingLabs on July 19 while undertaking successful campaigns targeting firms in the industrial and pharmaceutical space.</p> <p>"In those incidents, it often launched attacks on public holidays and during the early morning hours (Korean time) – looking to take advantage of periods in which staffing and monitoring within target environments were relaxed," ReversingLabs wrote in an advisory published on Thursday.</p> <p>In the document, the company claimed GwisinLocker is a new malware variant created by a previously little-known threat actor (TA) called "Gwisin" (a Korean term for 'ghost' or 'spirit').</p> <p>"In communications with its victims, the Gwisin group claims to have deep knowledge of their network and claim that they exfiltrated data with which to extort the company," ReversingLabs said.</p> <p>Additionally, ransom notes associated with GwisinLocker.Linux contained detailed internal information from the compromised environment, and encrypted files used file extensions customized to use the name of the victim company.</p> <p>Regarding details of the payment system behind the ransomware, ReversingLabs said GwisinLocker.Linux victims are required to log into a portal operated by the group and establish private communications channels for completing ransom payments.</p> <p>"As a result, little is known about the payment method used and/or cryptocurrency wallets associated with the group." Because of familiarity with the Korean language as well as with the South Korean government and law enforcement forces, ReversingLabs said Gwisin may be a North Korean-linked advanced persistent threat (APT) group.</p> <p>"This threat should be of particular concern to industrial and pharmaceutical companies in South Korea, which account for the bulk of Gwisin's victims to date," ReversingLabs explained.</p> <p>"However, it is reasonable to assume that this threat actor may expand its campaigns to organizations in other sectors, or even outside of South Korea."</p> <p>The security researchers concluded the advisory by warning firms concerned with GwisinLocker to review the Indicators of Compromise in the report and make them available to internal or external threat hunting teams.</p> |

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| HEADLINE | 08/05 New phishing tactic at India bank users |
| SOURCE | https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/hack-hostingers-preview-domain/?&web_view=true |
| GIST | <p>A team of security researchers from CloudSEK has discovered a new phishing tactic used by threat actors (TA) to target Indian banking customers via preview domains from Hosting Provider Hostinger.</p> <p>The new feature enables access to a site before it is accessible globally. In other words, it enables the viewing of website content without a domain (but after creating an account and adding a domain to host a website).</p> <p>The time between the moment of registration of the domain and when the domain becomes globally available is called DNS Zone Propagation time, which in the case of Hostinger, lasts between 12 and 24 hours.</p> <p>The unnamed TA would have exploited this timeframe and the preview domain feature to distribute phishing URLs and campaigns.</p> <p>“Threat actors have been consistently launching campaigns to defraud Indian banking users,” read the CloudSEK advisory. “Campaigns are hosted on phishing domains that are distributed via text, email and social media.”</p> <p>The method would have consequently eluded real-time monitoring from banks that typically enables them to detect and take down phishing sites quickly.</p> <p>According to CloudSEK, the preview domain URLs are temporary mirrors of their root domains, with the Hostinger preview URL scheme being domain-tld.preview-domain.com. The security researchers said the preview URLs remain available for 120 hours after setting up an account.</p> <p>Some examples of preview domains detected by CloudSEK’s contextual AI digital risk platform XVigil are available in the advisory’s full text.</p> <p>To help mitigate the impact of these attacks, CloudSEK recommended companies deploy measures to identify and take down copy-cat domains, as well as monitor previously taken down malicious domains.</p> <p>The phishing campaign against Indian users comes months after the personal Twitter account of India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, was attacked by cyber-criminals.</p> <p>More recently, Indian airline SpiceJet delayed a number of flights in May after reporting being hit by a ransomware attack.</p> |
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Terrorism, Extremism

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| HEADLINE | 08/05 Air Force charges 1: insider attack |
| SOURCE | https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/05/politics/air-force-charges-service-member-syria/index.html |
| GIST | <p>CNN — A US Air Force technical sergeant has been charged in connection with an attack in April at a US military base in northern Syria that injured four US service members, according to an Air Force statement.</p> <p>Sgt. David D. Dezwaan Jr., an explosive ordnance disposal expert assigned to the 75th Air Base Wing, Hill Air Force Base, has been charged by the Air Force, under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, with aggravated assault; dereliction of duty; destroying military property; reckless endangerment; accessing a government computer with an unauthorized purpose and obtaining classified information.</p> |

CNN first reported in June that the US military was investigating whether an American service member set off explosives in an insider attack on the small US base in northern Syria

The charges are brought after a criminal investigation into the incident that took place in Green Village, Syria. Two sets of explosives were set off on the base. An investigation by the Army's Criminal Investigation Division and the Air Force Office of Special Investigations led to Dezwaan being arrested in June.

A preliminary hearing is due to take place at Hill Air Force Base on August 23. The Air Force said in its statement that anyone facing charges is "presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty."

Initially, US officials said they believed the April 7 attack was caused by indirect fire on the base in a similar manner to rocket and mortar attacks that have been carried out in the region by militia groups. However, a week later, a military statement said that after "further investigation" the attack was believed to a result of "deliberate placement of explosive charges by an unidentified individual(s) at an ammunition holding area and shower facility."

The explosives used were described to CNN by two officials as "not insignificant" with more detonation power than a hand grenade. One official characterized the explosives as "military grade."

The four injured service members were diagnosed and treated for traumatic brain injuries after the explosions but returned to duty later in April.

After the incident, a "commander's investigation" was initiated by the US Central Command, which oversees operations in Syria, but it was turned over to the Criminal Investigation Division when it became clear the explosive pattern was not caused by incoming fire, officials say.

The Biden administration maintains around 900 troops in Syria, including special operations forces to advise and assist Syrian Democratic Forces.

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| HEADLINE | 08/08 Biden overstate role of AQ's leader? |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/08/us/politics/biden-al-zawahri-qaeda.html |
| GIST | <p>GUANTÁNAMO BAY, Cuba — In announcing last week that the leader of Al Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahri, had been killed in a U.S. drone strike in Kabul, Afghanistan, President Biden described the long-sought terrorist as "a mastermind" behind the U.S.S. Cole bombing in 2000.</p> <p>Mr. Biden also said that al-Zawahri was "deeply involved in the planning" of the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.</p> <p>There is no doubt that al-Zawahri was the leader of a terrorist movement whose global jihad has killed thousands of people. He was the deputy to Al Qaeda's founder, Osama bin Laden, and took over the organization in 2011.</p> <p>But as a matter of historical accuracy, Mr. Biden's words went well beyond how the government and terrorism specialists have described al-Zawahri's record with regard to those two particularly notorious attacks.</p> <p>Mr. Biden's portrayal of al-Zawahri as a key plotter of the Sept. 11 attacks was echoed in many news accounts about his speech, including in The New York Times. But it surprised counterterrorism experts, as did the characterization of al-Zawahri's role in the Cole bombing.</p> <p>The remarks also raised new questions in the Sept. 11 and U.S.S. Cole death-penalty cases, which have been mired in pretrial hearings for more than a decade. By Friday, lawyers in both cases said they had formally requested evidence from prosecutors to support Mr. Biden's statements.</p> |

Marc Sageman, a former C.I.A. officer who worked with Islamist fighters battling the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s and later wrote several books about terrorism networks and radicalization, said he was puzzled by Biden's portrayal of al-Zawahri and wondered where the purported role came from.

"Zawahri is a legitimate target," he said on Tuesday, a day after the president's address. "But the justification they gave yesterday was inaccurate. I doubt it. I strongly, strongly doubt it."

A senior administration official declined to say whether [Mr. Biden's wording was part of his prepared remarks](#) drafted by aides who had consulted with the intelligence community and other counterterrorism experts, or whether the president had ad-libbed it.

The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive matter, defended Mr. Biden's characterization of al-Zawahri's record in relation to the specific attacks as accurate. The Justice Department had [charged al-Zawahri, along with Bin Laden and many others](#), as conspirators in the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the official noted, adding that the government saw "a through line from that to Al Qaeda's major attacks in 2000, 2001 and beyond."

During [a briefing with reporters](#) shortly before Mr. Biden delivered his remarks, a different senior administration official described al-Zawahri as Bin Laden's "deputy during the 9/11 attacks," which is not in dispute. That official did not mention the Cole.

Prosecutors in federal civilian court and in the military commissions system at Guantánamo Bay have filed multiple indictments against Qaeda operatives accused of helping plot the Cole bombing. Those documents are dozens of pages long, laying out the government's understanding of the participants, meetings, financial transfers and other moves that made up the conspiracy.

They do not portray al-Zawahri as a mastermind of the operation, a suicide bombing by two men in a skiff that killed 17 American sailors.

A Saudi prisoner, [Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri](#), is described that way in a death-penalty case at Guantánamo Bay. A [C.I.A. profile at the time of his transfer](#) in 2006 referred to him as "the mastermind and local manager of the bombing in October 2000." [His charges](#) mention al-Zawahri as one of 26 participants in a Qaeda conspiracy to commit acts of terrorism in general, but not as the mastermind.

Nor is al-Zawahri [portrayed that way](#) in the 2003 [federal court indictment](#) of two accused members of the Cole conspiracy, [Fahd al-Quso](#) and [Jamal al-Badawi](#). Both men were killed in U.S. strikes in Yemen, in 2012 and 2019, with President Donald J. Trump saying on Twitter that Badawi was "the leader" of the Cole attack.

[A military charge sheet](#) filed in 2012 against five Guantánamo detainees who were [accused of conspiring in the Sept. 11 attacks](#) mentioned al-Zawahri only for his joint declaration of war with Bin Laden in 1998, in describing the group's history.

Within hours of President Biden's announcement, former President Barack Obama [used similar language on Twitter](#), calling al-Zawahri "one of the masterminds" of the Sept. 11 attacks.

But defense lawyers said the language did not match the descriptions in the case at Guantánamo.

"The 9/11 charges, discovery and proof so far make almost no mention of al-Zawahri," said James G. Connell III, a capital defense lawyer for Ammar al-Baluchi, the nephew of [Khalid Shaikh Mohammed](#), who is commonly described as their architect of the attack.

The senior military defense lawyer in the Cole case, Capt. Brian L. Mizer of the Navy, said that al-Zawahri figured in pretrial evidence only as a deputy in Al Qaeda, not as someone who had a specific role in the operation.

Ali Soufan, a former F.B.I. agent who investigated Al Qaeda in the period surrounding both attacks, said al-Zawahri was not the operational mastermind of either plot. But as a senior leader, he said, al-Zawahri helped set the strategic direction for Al Qaeda's major actions during that time.

"He was involved in greenlighting operations and advising Bin Laden," Mr. Soufan said.

Specifically, Mr. Soufan said, there is evidence that at a council meeting of senior Qaeda leaders, some opposed the Sept. 11 plot, fearing repercussions for their safe haven in Afghanistan, but al-Zawahri backed Bin Laden's desire to go forward with it.

Emile Nakhleh, a retired senior intelligence service officer and director of the Political Islam Strategic Analysis Program at the C.I.A., said al-Zawahri was absolutely an important target. "We don't put \$25 million on the head of a small fish," he said.

But he considered al-Zawahri to be more of a "strategic thinker of Al Qaeda."

The senior administration official who defended Mr. Biden's remarks also pointed to comments by Kirk Lippold, who commanded the Cole at the time of the attack. Mr. Lippold [said on a news program last week](#) that al-Zawahri, along with Bin Laden, had been "intimately involved in the planning."

But Mr. Lippold, who declined to comment for this article, did not cite any specific basis for portraying al-Zawahri as intimately involved in the planning. In his 2012 memoir about the incident, "Front Burner: Al Qaeda's Attack on the U.S.S. Cole," Mr. Lippold mentioned Bin Laden about two dozen times but did not mention al-Zawahri.

Mark Fallon, who was the commander of a Navy task force that investigated the Cole bombing and later oversaw investigations in the military commissions system, said he recalled speculation that al-Zawahri might have been involved in planning both attacks, but he was not aware of evidence supporting a direct link.

"It's just not a factual narrative that they're telling," he said. "It's a talking point."

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| HEADLINE | 08/08 Spy agencies pivot toward China |
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| SOURCE | https://apnews.com/article/afghanistan-russia-ukraine-al-qaida-biden-ayman-zawahri-15e3f9282d6eac7b9c793394fff5497c |
| GIST | <p>WASHINGTON (AP) — In a recent closed-door meeting with leaders of the agency's counterterrorism center, the CIA's No. 2 official made clear that fighting al-Qaida and other extremist groups would remain a priority — but that the agency's money and resources would be increasingly shifted to focusing on China.</p> <p>The CIA drone attack that killed al-Qaida's leader showed that fighting terrorism is hardly an afterthought. But it didn't change the message the agency's deputy director, David Cohen, delivered at that meeting weeks earlier: While the U.S. will continue to go after terrorists, the top priority is trying to better understand and counter Beijing.</p> <p>One year after ending the war in Afghanistan, President Joe Biden and top national security officials speak less about counterterrorism and more about the political, economic and military threats posed by China as well as Russia. There's been a quiet pivot within intelligence agencies, which are moving hundreds of officers to China-focused positions, including some who were previously working on terrorism.</p> <p>The last week makes clear that the U.S. has to deal with both at the same time. Days after Ayman al-Zawahri was killed in Kabul, China staged large-scale military exercises and threatened to cut off contacts with the U.S. over House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan.</p> |

The U.S. has long been alarmed by China's growing political and economic ambitions. China [has tried to influence foreign elections](#), mounted [campaigns of cyber and corporate espionage](#), and [detained millions of minority Uyghurs in camps](#). Some experts also think Beijing will in coming years [try to seize the self-ruled democratic island of Taiwan](#) by force.

Intelligence officials have said [they need more insights on China](#), including after being unable to definitively pinpoint the cause of the COVID-19 pandemic. Beijing has been accused of [withholding information](#) about the origins of the virus.

And the war in Ukraine has underscored Russia's importance as a target. The U.S. [used declassified information to expose](#) Russian President Vladimir Putin's war plans before the invasion and rally diplomatic support for Kyiv.

Supporters of the Biden administration approach note that the U.S. was able to track and kill al-Zawahri is evidence of its capabilities to target threats in Afghanistan from abroad. Critics say the fact that al-Zawahri was living in Kabul, under the apparent protection of the Taliban, [suggests there's a resurgence of extremist groups](#) that America is ill-equipped to counter.

The shift in priorities is supported by many former intelligence officers and lawmakers from both parties who say it's overdue. That includes people who served in Afghanistan and other missions against al-Qaida and other terrorist groups.

Rep. Jason Crow, a former Army Ranger who served in Afghanistan and Iraq, said he believed the U.S. had been overly focused on counterterrorism over the last several years.

"A far greater existential threat is Russia and China," said Crow, a Colorado Democrat who serves on the House Intelligence and Armed Services committees. Terrorist groups, he said, "will not destroy the American way of life ... the way China can."

CIA spokesperson Tammy Thorp noted that terrorism "remains a very real challenge."

"Even as crises such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine and strategic challenges such as that posed by the People's Republic of China demand our attention, CIA will continue to aggressively track terrorist threats globally and work with partners to counter them," Thorp said.

Congress has pushed the CIA and other intelligence agencies to make China a top priority, according to several people familiar with the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence matters. Pushing resources toward China has required cuts elsewhere, including in counterterrorism. Specific figures were unavailable because intelligence budgets are classified.

In particular, lawmakers want more information about China's development in advanced technologies. Under President Xi Jinping, China has committed trillions of dollars in investment on quantum science, artificial intelligence and other technologies that are likely to disrupt how future wars are fought and economies are structured.

As part of the shift, congressional committees are trying to better track how intelligence agencies spend their funding on China, seeking more detail about how specific programs contribute to that mission, one person familiar with the matter said.

"We are late, but it's good that we're finally changing our focus into that region," said Rep. Chris Stewart, a Utah Republican who serves on the House Intelligence Committee. "That means in people, in resources, in military assets, and in diplomacy."

The CIA [last year announced it would create](#) two new "mission centers" — one on China, one on emerging technologies — to centralize and improve intelligence collection on those issues. The CIA is

also trying to recruit more Chinese speakers and reduce wait times on security clearances to hire new people faster.

Inside the agency, many officers are learning Chinese and moving into new roles focused on China, though not all of those jobs require language training, people familiar with the matter said.

Officials note that intelligence officers are trained to adapt to new challenges and that many were moved more quickly into counterterrorism roles after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Advances from counterterrorism work — including better use of data and different sources of intelligence to build networks and identify targets — are also useful in countering Russia and China, former officers said.

“It’s the analytics and targeting machine that has become extraordinary,” said Douglas Wise, a former CIA senior officer who was deputy chief of operations at the counterterrorism center.

The CIA’s Counterterrorism Center, renamed the Counterterrorism Mission Center in a 2015 reorganization, remains a point of pride for many people who credit its work for keeping Americans safe from terrorism after Sept. 11. CIA officers landed in Afghanistan on Sept. 26, 2001, and were part of operations to displace the Taliban and find and kill leaders of al-Qaida including Osama bin Laden.

And 13 years after a [double agent tricked officers](#) pursuing al-Zawahri and blew himself up, killing seven agency employees, the CIA killed him in a strike with no reported civilian casualties.

The CIA was also involved in some of the darkest moments of the fight against terrorism. It operated [secret “black site” jails](#) to hold terrorism suspects, some wrongly, and was found by a Senate investigation [to have used](#) interrogation methods that amounted to torture. Elite Afghan special operations units trained by the CIA [were also accused](#) of killing civilians and violating international law.

There’s long been a debate over whether counterterrorism pulled intelligence agencies too far away from traditional spying and whether some of the CIA’s work in targeting terrorists should instead be done by special forces under the military.

Marc Polymeropoulos is a retired CIA operations officer and former base chief in Afghanistan. He said he supports a greater focus on China and Russia but added, “There’s no reason to diminish what we had to do.”

“This notion that somehow all the CT work we did, somehow that was wrong, that we took our eye off the ball — just remember on Sept. 12 what everyone was feeling,” he said.

Re-orienting the agencies toward more of a focus on China and Russia will ultimately take years and require both patience and recognition that the agency’s culture will take time to change, Wise said.

“For decades, we have been doing counterterrorism,” Wise said. “We’ve got to have a rational plan to make this adaptation, which doesn’t take so long that our enemies can exploit a glacial process.”

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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Pakistani Taliban leader killed in blast |
| SOURCE | https://www.the-sun.com/news/5950532/pakistani-taliban-terror-leader-omar-khalid/ |
| GIST | <p>ONE of the world's most wanted terrorist leaders has been killed in Afghanistan, local reports say - days after al-Qaeda's chief was wiped out by a drone strike.</p> <p>Abdul Wali, also known as Omar Khalid Khorasani, was one of three Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan fanatics said to have been killed in an explosion targeting their vehicle.</p> <p>Their deaths are believed to be a heavy blow to the terror group, known as the Pakistani Taliban.</p> |

TTP co-founder Wali was considered to be one of the most influential and ruthless of its bosses, [Radio Free Europe](#) reports.

He led the Jamaat ul-Ahrar (JuA), faction which is designated by the US as a terrorist organization. The two other men who died have been identified as Hafiz Dawlat and Mufti Hassan.

The trio were driving in the Birmal district of the Afghan province of Paktika when their car hit a roadside mine on Sunday evening, anonymous sources told the network.

It is believed they were heading to Birmal "for consultation", the sources said.

They were based in Afghanistan's Kunar and Nangarhar provinces.

Journalist Pir Zubair Shah posted to Twitter: "One of the cofounders of Pakistani Taliban group, TTP Abdul Wali aka Omar Khalid had been killed in Afghanistan, sources in the region say.

"The circumstances surrounding his killing are not clear yet."

In October 2017, it was widely reported Wali had been killed by a suspected US drone attack in Afghanistan.

At the time, it was reported he led a faction of the Pakistani Taliban behind several high-profile bomb attacks inside Pakistan.

However it emerged he was still alive and a year later, the US put Wali on its [Rewards For Justice wanted list](#) with a \$3million bounty on his head.

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| HEADLINE | 08/05 FBI: AQ determined to strike at US |
| SOURCE | https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220805-fbi-alqaida-determined-to-strike-at-us-despite-leaders-killing |
| GIST | <p>FBI Director Christopher Wray said on Thursday that he remains worried about the potential for a large-scale attack planned or inspired by al-Qaida despite the killing of its top leader in a U.S. drone strike in Afghanistan last weekend.</p> <p>Both al-Qaida and the Islamic State as well as their affiliates “intend to carry out or inspire large-scale attacks in the United States,” Wray said during testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee.</p> <p>Al-Qaida chief Ayman al-Zawahiri, a key architect of the attacks of September 11, 2001, was killed during the early Sunday morning strike on a safehouse in central Kabul.</p> <p>Asked if al-Qaida or the Islamic State would strike at the United States if given the opportunity, Wray said, “Oh, yeah!”</p> <p>In the near term, however, al-Qaida, with its leadership degraded, is more likely to focus on “cultivating its international affiliates and supporting small-scale” attacks in regions such as East and West Africa, he said.</p> <p>In his first public remarks about al-Zawahiri’s killing, Wray said he was “not surprised but disappointed” that the head of al-Qaida was found hiding in a safehouse allegedly owned by a senior member of the Haqqani Network.</p> <p>Al-Zawahiri, who took over as al-Qaida leader after Osama bin Laden was killed in a U.S. raid in 2011, was on the FBI’s Most Wanted List with a \$25 million reward for his capture.</p> |

After the strike, the Biden administration accused the Taliban of violating a 2020 agreement under which the group pledged not to allow any terrorist groups to use Afghan soil to threaten the United States or its allies.

Taliban officials said they were unaware of al-Zawahiri's residence in Kabul.

Asked by Republican Senator Lindsey Graham whether al-Zawahiri's presence in the Haqqani safehouse suggested the Taliban and al-Qaida continued to enjoy a close relationship, Wray tersely responded: "Nothing good."

'Intelligence Gaps'

The "over-the-horizon" strike against al-Zawahiri has augmented the view held by some experts and Biden administration officials that the United States can continue to carry out such counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan without maintaining a presence on the ground.

Still, Wray said he's worried about the "potential loss of and collection [of intelligence]" in the wake of the U.S. withdrawal in Afghanistan.

"So, we're going to have growing intelligence gaps," he said.

"And I'm worried about the possibility that we'll see al-Qaida reconstruct, ISIS-K taking potential advantage of the deteriorating security environment, and I'm worried about terrorists, including here in the United States, being inspired by what they see over there," he said. ISIS-K refers to Afghanistan's Islamic State affiliate, Islamic State Khorasan.

Providing an assessment of national security threats facing the United States, he said the potential dangers have never been "greater or more diverse."

The greatest threat emanates from "lone actors or small cells" who tend to radicalize online and attack soft targets, he said.

The FBI divides the domestic threats into two buckets: domestic violent extremists such as violent white supremacists and homegrown violent extremists such as ISIS-inspired jihadis.

Wray confirmed that the FBI is investigating a number of Afghan refugees who were airlifted to the United States last year despite security concerns.

The refugees were part of the more than 80,000 Afghan evacuees moved to the United States following the Taliban takeover last August.

In a report in February, the Defense Department's inspector general faulted the National Counter-Terrorism Center for not fully vetting the evacuees, allowing at least 50 Afghans with "potentially significant security concerns" to enter the country.

Republican Senator Josh Hawley said a whistleblower recently came forward to claim that as many as 324 Afghans had been admitted into the United States despite appearing on a Defense Department watchlist.

"This is a watchlist that identifies folks whose biometrics have been collected and determined to be threats or potential threats to national security, including known suspected terrorists," Hawley said.

Asked if the Defense or Homeland Security departments had communicated the new figure to the FBI, Wray said he did not know the exact number.

"I know there are a number of individuals through our joint terrorism task force that we're actively trying to investigate as a result of" the inspector general report, he said.

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| | Wray said the FBI has “a lot of information about where people are located,” but he could not tell whether the FBI knew their whereabouts “at any given time.” |
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| HEADLINE | 08/08 Rogue Afghan soldier is Taliban ‘hero’ |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/aug/08/i-will-continue-killing-foreigners-soldier-who-shot-dead-unarmed-australians-treated-as-returning-hero-by-taliban |
| GIST | <p>Hekmatullah, the rogue Afghan soldier who killed three unarmed Australian diggers in Afghanistan a decade ago, is living in a luxury home in the capital Kabul, treated as a “returning hero” by the Taliban who released him from prison.</p> <p>He has said he does not regret killing Australian soldiers, and has vowed he would again kill Australians, or anyone who opposes the Taliban.</p> <p>“If I am released I will continue killing foreigners,” Hekmatullah told an official of the former Afghan government when his release was being negotiated.</p> <p>“I will continue killing Australians and I will kill you as well because you are a puppet of foreigners,” he said.</p> <p>“I am among my brothers, we will be free, Afghanistan will be free. We will kill you.”</p> <p>Since returning to Afghanistan, Hekmatullah has reportedly been housed in the former diplomatic quarter of Wazir Akbar Khan. He lives in a heavily secured property in a district adjacent to the clandestine former home of Ayman al-Zawahiri, the former al-Qaida leader assassinated eight days ago by a US drone strike as he stood on the balcony of his villa.</p> <p>Hekmatullah’s release from prison in 2020 was fiercely resisted by Australia, with the government previously conceding it did not know where he had been since being freed.</p> <p>Of 5,000 prisoners the Taliban wanted released as part of peace deal negotiations with the US, Hekmatullah was one of six terrorists that western governments fiercely resisted being pardoned, because they had either killed unarmed foreign nationals, were unrepentant about their crimes, or had vowed to commit further acts of violent terrorism.</p> <p>A former senior official in the democratically elected government of Afghanistan – overthrown in August 2021 – has confirmed to the Guardian Hekmatullah’s return to Afghanistan.</p> <p>“He was welcomed back to Kabul as a hero ... with a house, car, guards, an amnesty for his crimes, his expenses are being paid for. He is being treated as a hero.”</p> <p>The Guardian has independently confirmed Hekmatullah’s repatriation to Afghanistan. Family members of the Australian soldiers killed have said they have not been updated on his whereabouts.</p> <p>On 29 August 2012, at Wahab, a patrol base in Afghanistan’s Uruzgan province, Hekmatullah, then an Afghan National Army sergeant, drew his M16 and fired more than 30 rounds from close range at Australian troops. He killed three: L/Cpl Stjepan Milosevic, 40, Spr James Martin, 21, and Pte Robert Poate, 23.</p> <p>Hekmatullah fled the base into the Baluchi valley and was designated a “high-value” target for the Australian SAS in Afghanistan within 24 hours. He was the sole target of a controversial SAS mission to the village of Darwan in Uruzgan province on 11 September 2012, based on – ultimately flawed – intelligence he was hiding in the village.</p> |

The mission was the subject of extensive evidence presented during the long-running defamation trial brought by the former SAS corporal Ben Roberts-Smith, who denies all wrongdoing in relation to an allegation he participated in the murder of an Afghan national during that mission.

Two other Australian SAS soldiers have also been accused of unlawfully killing Afghan nationals during the raid – allegations they deny.

It was not until February 2013 that Hekmatullah was arrested after being found hiding in Pakistan's lawless border region. Charged, tried and convicted of three counts of murder, Hekmatullah was sentenced to death, but served only seven years in Bagram prison before being moved to Qatar in 2020, where he lived under house arrest.

After the fall of Kabul to the Taliban, he returned to Afghanistan, where he now lives in Kabul.

The senior former government source said he insisted to senior government officials that Hekmatullah not be released, because he presented an ongoing danger, but objections to his release were overruled because of a US desire to conclude its 2020 peace agreement with the Taliban.

"The person I met is a dangerous terrorist, a dangerous man," the source said. "He is not repentant, not regretful. He is a threat, he can cause harm to the world. He should not have been released."

The source said Hekmatullah appeared to be "very well protected", with close links to senior Taliban officials now in government.

"But the Taliban who hold the strongest grudges, who want to take revenge, are those who were in prison, including him, Hekmatullah. He has hatred still."

The release of the 5,000 Taliban prisoners was the subject of fierce and fractious debate during negotiations between the US and representatives of the terror networks in Qatar.

The US-led Coalition objected to 200 of the prisoners because of the nature of their crimes – green-on-blue attacks, or attacking civilian targets – or because they were seen to be ongoing terror threats. Hekmatullah was among the 200.

After further negotiations, the list of objections was reduced to 15: Hekmatullah was still on the list. After still more talks, the list of objections was just six names. Hekmatullah remained still, deemed unsuitable for release.

In August 2020, then prime minister Scott Morrison said he spoke directly with then US president Donald Trump, urging that Hekmatullah remain imprisoned.

Hekmatullah, Morrison said, was "responsible for murdering three Australians and our position is that he should never be released".

But the US overruled Australia's objections, arguing the release of terrorist prisoners, while unpopular, would lead to a "reduction of violence and direct talks resulting in a peace agreement and an end to the war" in Afghanistan.

Australia's department of foreign affairs and trade declined to answer questions on Hekmatullah.

The anonymous previous-government source told the Guardian former officials who remain in Afghanistan face the grave threat of retribution from the Taliban.

"The Taliban is seeking revenge: they have no mercy. We will be identified soon. Our lives, and the lives of our families, are in danger."

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| | <p>He said the US assassination of al-Zawahiri, the former al-Qaeda leader, had escalated tensions – and heightened Taliban security fears – dramatically.</p> <p>“The world is definitely putting pressure on the Taliban for appearances. But no matter how much pressure is put on the Taliban, they put pressure on the people.” Those who worked for the former democratically elected government have “been left on the battlefield ... as enemies of the Taliban”, he said.</p> <p>A Human Rights Watch report this month said Taliban forces had summarily executed or forcibly disappeared more than 100 former police and intelligence officers in four provinces since taking over the country in August 2021, in defiance of a proclaimed amnesty.</p> <p>“Summary killings and enforced disappearances have taken place despite the Taliban’s announced amnesty for former government civilian and military officials, and reassurances from the Taliban leadership that they would hold their forces accountable for violations of the amnesty order,” the report said.</p> <p>“The Taliban, through their intelligence operations and access to employment records that the former government left behind, have identified new targets for arrest and execution.”</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Life in Afghanistan year into Taliban rule |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/07/they-beat-girls-just-for-smiling-life-in-afghanistan-one-year-after-the-talibans-return |
| GIST | <p>Despite their promises of peace and stability, the country is on its knees, and its people are desperate</p> <p>Maryam* is near the top of her sixth grade class in Kabul, which under Taliban rule means that her education should be ending in a few months.</p> <p>But the 10-year-old, whose name we have changed to protect her identity, has a strategy to stay in school for another year, and her eyes dance with satisfaction as she explains her plan. “I will make sure I don’t answer too many questions right. I have decided to fail, so I can study sixth grade again.”</p> <p>This is Afghanistan nearly a year after the Taliban seized control of the country in a lightning advance, moving so fast to take Kabul they surprised even their own leadership.</p> <p>The country’s brightest young citizens are harnessing their intelligence to self-sabotage, because in a twisted system the group has created, that gives them more hope than success.</p> <p>In their campaign for Afghanistan, and in international talks with the US, the Taliban offered an implicit promise, that in return for a slightly tempered version of their puritanical extremism, they would at least bring peace and stability to a country racked by decades of war.</p> <p>Women had an Islamic right to education and to work, their envoys said at international conferences, and without constant war the Afghan economy would have more room to grow. As hundreds of thousands of Afghans fled, many others welcomed the silencing of the guns with hope.</p> <p>Nearly a year on, that vision looks increasingly hollow. Talking about the seismic shift last August, Taliban refer to before and after “the victory”. Ordinary Persian-speaking Afghans in the capital speak about life before and after “the fall”, or “the collapse”, suqut in Afghanistan’s Dari dialect.</p> <p>The Taliban are an isolated pariah state, not recognised by a single country, even erstwhile allies. Their embrace of their old, violent allies was dramatically exposed last week when the US killed the leader of al Qaida in the heart of Kabul’s elite Sherpur neighbourhood.</p> |

Before that though, they had spent months out of the global spotlight. Putin's invasion of Ukraine was a gift to the Taliban, drawing the world's attention away as the group cranked up their extremist policies.

Women face harsher restrictions here than anywhere else in the world, barred from secondary education and most work outside healthcare and education. They are forced to be accompanied by a male guardian for all but short journeys and required to cover their faces in public.

Restrictions are enforced intermittently but, particularly for poorer and more vulnerable women including those without a guardian, the fear of enforcement alone can be crippling.

"Three times now I've seen women being beaten in the market by Taliban. Some were wearing trousers they thought were too tight, you should have seen how broken they were afterwards," said Farkhunda*, 16, who had to stop school in September and has been battling depression.

"Another time they beat girls just for smiling and talking too loud. It's a natural thing to chat about dresses you are buying and things," she said."

She doesn't have Taliban-regulation long, black abaya and the family can't afford to buy one. "Since then I've even stopped going to study at the madrassa [religious school], it's better to be at home than run into these animals," she said.

Economic collapse

The economy has collapsed by at least a third, after international sanctions on the Taliban cut trade, the aid that had sustained the last regime dried up, and a militant group ill-prepared to shift from fighting an insurgency to running a government stumbled in their management. "We weren't politically linked to the last government, but the Taliban are just taking revenge that we were here doing business," said one major entrepreneur who has laid off almost 500 staff after equipment was confiscated and licenses suspended across several sectors.

He is frustrated but also baffled by the authorities' short-term approach. His businesses sit idle although the new regime knows from experience how lucrative they can be. "I had paid them over \$3m in forced 'taxes'," before they took over, he said. "So many businesses have already collapsed, and if things continue, more will go."

For the previously rich, the downturn has brought an end to luxuries, but many of the former middle classes have been plunged virtually overnight into poverty and hunger. At least half the population now rely on food aid, if they can get it.

Sardar* and his wife had government jobs in the security forces, and earned enough to buy land and build a house. They were both fired when the Taliban came to power. Today, she sits at home while he touts for manual labour by the roadside and is lucky to get a day's work in a week, for 200 afghanis (\$2).

"I've never done this in my life and it's tough for me because I am not used to it, but I have a family to support," he says, as his four children play at his feet. "I swear that currently I don't even have 1,000 afghanis in the house, my mother has diabetes and we don't have money for her medication."

At times the country's new leadership has been stunningly callous about this suffering, telling Afghans they should trust in God to feed them, not their government. But they are also aware the crisis is eroding any trust they may have.

"They are losing domestic support and very aware of it," said an Afghan analyst with connections to senior Taliban, who asked not to be named speaking about internal issues within the group.

The Taliban were always going to struggle with the transition from running a decentralised rural insurgency to taking over the administration in Kabul.

“Running a government is the biggest nightmare they should have. They were surprised with all the development,” said an Afghan source with close Taliban links, who said the leadership were out of their depth after they arrived in a capital that had been transformed from the city they abandoned in 2001.

“They are traditional rural forces, they have come to cities, but instead of integrating themselves, they want the cities to be integrated to them, they want us to look like them, have beliefs and hobbies like them.”

An entire generation of educated Afghans has fled, or is looking for a way out. The desperation to leave was not surprising, given that the Taliban had targeted professionals across media, civil society and government for assassination for years. While the widespread orgy of killing some feared the Taliban would unleash on Kabul never took place, dozens of people have been assassinated because of their links with the previous government and its security forces.

One former member of the intelligence service told the Observer how he had surrendered the day the Taliban reached his town, but had been arrested three times subsequently while trying to work. Now he barely leaves his home.

The brain drain has made running the country even harder. The central bank, struggling with frozen reserves and sanctions, has kept on only mid and low-level staff, with the most experienced senior managers fleeing abroad, one banker who has been involved in months of crisis talks told the Observer.

One area where the Taliban registered some success was battling the obscene levels of graft that have scarred the administrations of the past 20 years, but their progress there is slowing.

“Corruption is not as bad as under [former president Ashraf] Ghani, when you entered an office to sort something out and everyone from A to Z wanted something. Now there are just a couple of specific people, but it is expanding,” the businessman said.

Violence renewed

Between the apple groves of Ismail Khel village, barely an hour’s drive southwest of Kabul, a flag painted with a rose, a tulip and a drone releasing bombs flutters over a small cluster of graves.

To the right are the abandoned ruins of a house, where 14 years ago, at least eight women and children died in an airstrike. They were buried beside their home.

To the left, Haji Yahyah, 66, still lives with his wife and a niece in the patched-up wreckage of their home, hit by a second bomb that killed his daughter-in-law and his nephew. They never got compensation from American forces to rebuild, and stayed because they had nowhere else to go.

Villagers say those were the only aerial attacks on this farming community, but for over a decade the area was racked by death and violence, as foreign and government troops would land in helicopters and storm through the houses.

“We have four graveyards in this village. Twenty years ago we had just one,” said Ainullah, 53. “A charity came to the village recently, looking for kids who had lost a parent, to help them with food. They could hardly find a house in the village without at least one.”

Every man stopped by visiting journalists (women rarely speak to strangers in a conservative rural area) had a harrowing story of losing civilian brothers, cousins, uncles, executed during these raids, sometimes in front of their children, always within earshot.

These night raids and the deaths of civilians were powerful recruiting sergeants, and one reason the west and its allies lost their war.

“Many, many people joined the Taliban because of the pain of these cases. If your father or son is killed in front of you, wouldn’t you want to take revenge? And the way to do that was to join the Taliban,” said Mohammad Habib, 26.

“When people heard the choppers at night they would do their ablutions, so at least they would die clean, and get dressed so their corpses would be decent.”

In parts of the country like this, where the guns have finally fallen silent after a decade, or even two, villages are coming back to life. Schools are opening in some districts of southern Helmand and Kandahar where security – including threats from the Taliban – made education impossible.

But there are also places that were quiet over the past two decades which are now ravaged by violence and abuse, including slaughter of civilians, night raids, looting and commandeering of civilian infrastructure such as clinics and schools.

From Panjshir province in the north, in Baghlan district and in Balkhab in central Sar-e Pol, videos and reports are emerging of atrocities like those that once fuelled the Taliban. Civilians have been killed, schools have been commandeered as military bases, mosques have been desecrated and homes raided.

Widespread violence across the country or a new round of a civil war that began with the Soviet invasion in 1978 seems impossible for now, but many felt the same 21 years ago. The US was convinced that a crushing military victory in 2001 meant it could impose its political will on a diverse country, where the austere extremists had a real constituency.

“The notion the Taliban movement could be swept away by US military might proved to be yet another case of wishful thinking,” Jolyon Leslie and Chris Johnson wrote in a 2004 book on the troubled new order, Afghanistan: The Mirage of Peace. Their startlingly prescient analysis was widely dismissed as gloomy and out of touch at the time of publication. Now the Taliban may be repeating the same error, mistaking their own crushing military victory for a political mandate to control a diverse country.

“The Taliban are representing the Taliban, not Afghanistan. Half of the population has not been represented in government at all in the past nine months,” said the Afghan analyst. As in 2001, whole ethnic, religious and cultural communities have been excluded from a government dominated almost entirely by Pashtun Taliban extremists.

Those groups have a long history of fighting and, if the Taliban cannot ease Afghanistan’s political and economic crises, may too easily be persuaded to pick up guns again.

“Only 2% of Afghans are over 60, and 45% are under 14,” said one veteran of several of Afghanistan’s many civil wars. Give a boy \$100 and a Kalashnikov and you have a fighter. We are living with human timebombs. They grew up with weapons and don’t need two weeks’ training: one hour will be enough.”

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| HEADLINE | 08/05 AQ gains ground African conflict zones |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/05/al-qaida-chiefs-killing-comes-as-group-gains-ground-in-african-conflict-zones |
| GIST | <p>It was one of Ayman al-Zawahiri’s last victories. Just over a week before the al-Qaida leader was killed in Kabul by missiles fired from a US drone, militants from the organisation’s biggest affiliate in sub-Saharan Africa attacked the most important military base in Mali.</p> <p>The tactics of the attack were familiar – suicide bombers blowing a gap in defences to allow gunmen to reach stunned defenders – but the operation marked a major escalation.</p> <p>In more than a decade of insurgent warfare in Mali, al-Qaida had never struck any target of such significance nor so close to the capital, Bamako.</p> |

The attack on the base in Kati underlined the tenacity of the organisation in Africa and elsewhere despite decades of intense pressure from a US-led counter terrorist campaign and fierce rivalry from a breakaway faction that became the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (Isis or IS).

“The international context is favourable to al-Qaida, which intends to be recognised again as the leader of global jihad,” a UN report compiled from intelligence supplied by members states said in July.

The attack in Mali last month was a vindication of Zawahiri’s 2011 decision to abandon the strategy of spectacular strikes against the west that had been favoured by his predecessor, Osama bin Laden. Instead, he directed al-Qaida’s regional commanders to seek gains locally, without being distracted by attempts to attack international aviation or bomb European cities.

The recent UN report warned that any territory carved out by al-Qaida or IS might be used as launchpads for such operations in the near future.

“The threat from IS and al-Qaida remains relatively low in non-conflict zones, but is much higher in areas directly affected by conflict or neighbouring it. Unless some of these conflicts are brought to a successful resolution ... one or more of them will incubate an external operational capability for Isil [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant], al-Qaida or a related terrorist group,” it said.

Progress made in Mali vindicated another part of Zawahiri’s strategy: to build grassroots support. The grievances of marginalised communities could be exploited, particularly where government was weak or predatory, he told leaders of affiliates after taking control of al-Qaida in 2011. Strong ties could be built with local actors through collaboration and even inter-marriage. If they used violence, affiliates needed to seek targets that would be seen as legitimate.

The strategy predated the rise of IS from 2014, but the success of the rival group added impetus. Where IS relied on fear and coercion to cow local populations, al-Qaida sought to appear as moderate in comparison.

Al-Qaida has suffered major setbacks – almost eliminated in Syria and Iraq and unable to compete with IS in some theatres, such as Nigeria and Egypt’s Sinai desert.

But in Africa particularly Zawahiri’s strategy has paid off. The late leader personally concluded an alliance with al-Shabaab, the extremist movement which controls much of Somalia’s rural areas and can field a force of thousands. In July 500 al-Shabaab fighters took on Ethiopian troops in an unprecedented cross-border incursion. The Somali affiliate is also wealthy enough to send millions of dollars to the al-Qaida central leadership, intelligence suggests.

Deep problems caused by competition for resources due to climate change, political instability, massive displacement of population and the recent withdrawal of French troops from Mali offer al-Qaida opportunities for further expansion, analysts say.

Al -Qaida’s affiliate in Mali, Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), has been quick to exploit the presence of the Wagner Group, a Russian private military company with links to the Kremlin hired to support the country’s embattled military.

Wagner has been repeatedly accused of systematic human rights abuses, including massacres of civilians, which turn local communities against the government and build support for extremists.

The attack on the Kati base outside Bamako was a response to governmental collaboration with the Wagner Group, JNIM said.

“We say to the Bamako government: if you have the right to hire mercenaries to kill the defenceless innocent people, then we have the right to destroy you and target you,” the group explained in a statement translated by the SITE Intelligence Group.

Gen Stephen J Townsend, commander of the US Africa Command, told reporters last week that JNIM were “on the march towards the south”.

“They are now nearly investing ... Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso’s capital, and they are starting operations now in the ... border regions of the coastal states. So this is of great concern, I think, for the world that’s watching,” he said.

In north Africa, al-Qaida still has a presence but has been largely squeezed out of Libya and Tunisia as the chaos seen earlier in the decade has calmed.

Its affiliate in Yemen, though also weaker than before, still exists and has long been considered by western security experts a potential threat. Outside Africa, the biggest gains have been made in Afghanistan.

“The Taliban victory has very predictably strengthened al-Qaida’s hand ... That is simply a fact,” said Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, CEO of the US-based threat analysis firm Valens Global.

Al-Qaida has built deep relationships with key factions and senior members of the Taliban who, though divided, appear prepared to offer the group a safe haven on certain conditions. The house Zawahiri was living in with his family when he was killed was owned by an aide of Sirajuddin Haqqani, the Afghan interior minister.

Other prominent al-Qaida veterans are in Iran, where they fled in 2002 but are still active, despite restrictions on their movements and communications, reports suggest.

A challenge for the group is that many obvious heirs to al-Zawahiri have been killed, said Katherine Zimmerman, fellow at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington.

These include younger leadership candidates such as Hamza bin Laden, the founder’s son, who died in a drone strike in Pakistan between 2017 and 2019. Al-Qaida’s No 2 was killed in what is believed to be an operation by the Mossad in Tehran in 2020.

An important factor that may help al-Qaida is that the US and its allies are now focused elsewhere.

“We are not devoting that much attention ... and the question at least here in DC is what would cause us to pivot away from Asia again?” said Zimmerman. “What would be the strategic distraction from our new China focus? Everyone says a major terror attack, but I’m not convinced actually that it would do it.”

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| HEADLINE | 08/06 Kabul street bombing kills 8, injures 22 |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/06/afghanistan-bomb-in-kabul-shopping-street-injures-at-least-22-people |
| GIST | <p>A bomb exploded in a busy shopping street in Afghanistan’s capital Kabul on Saturday killed eight people and injured at least 22, hospital officials and witnesses said.</p> <p>The blast occurred in a western district of the city where members of the minority Shia Muslim community regularly meet.</p> <p>Video footage posted online showed ambulances rushing to the scene, which is also near bus stations.</p> <p>A senior medical officer at a private hospital said at least eight people died and 22 were wounded.</p> <p>The Taliban interior ministry said an investigation team was at the blast site to help the wounded and assess casualties.</p> |

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| | <p>No militant group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, which came ahead of Ashura, a commemoration of the martyrdom of Hussein, a grandson of the prophet Muhammad, which is marked mainly by Shia Muslims.</p> <p>On Friday, at least eight people were killed and 18 injured in a blast in Kabul carried out by Islamic State, a Sunni Muslim militant group.</p> <p>IS does not control any territory in Afghanistan but does have deadly sleeper cells that have been targeting religious minorities in the country as well as Taliban patrols.</p> <p>Sunni Muslim Taliban authorities, who took over Afghanistan in August last year after a two-decade insurgency, have said they would provide more protection for Shia mosques and other facilities.</p> <p>Sayed Kazum Hojat, a Shia religious scholar in Kabul, said the Taliban government had ramped up security ahead of Ashura but should improve vigilance for any threats.</p> <p>No up-to-date census data exists, but estimates put the size of Afghanistan's Shia community at between 10% and 20% of the 39 million population, including Persian-speaking Tajiks and Pashtuns as well as Hazaras.</p> |
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Suspicious, Unusual

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| HEADLINE | 08/08 Earth shortest day ever recorded |
| SOURCE | https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/08/world/earth-shortest-day-rotation-scn/index.html |
| GIST | <p>(CNN)If you feel like there's less time in the day, you're correct.</p> <p>Scientists recorded the shortest day on Earth since the invention of the atomic clock.</p> <p>Our planet's rotation measured in at 1.59 milliseconds short of the normal 24-hour day on June 29, according to the International Earth Rotation and Reference Systems Service, an organization in charge of global timekeeping.</p> <p>A rotation is the length of time the Earth takes to spin once on its axis, which is roughly 84,600 seconds.</p> <p>The previous record was documented on July 19, 2020, when the day measured 1.47 milliseconds shorter than normal.</p> <p>The atomic clock is a standardized unit of measurement that has been used since the 1950s to tell time and measure the Earth's rotation, said Dennis McCarthy, retired director of time at the US Naval Observatory.</p> <p>Despite June 29 breaking a record for the shortest day in modern history, there have been much shorter days on Earth, he said.</p> <p>When dinosaurs still roamed the planet 70 million years ago, a single day on Earth lasted about 23 1/2 hours, according to a 2020 study published in Paleoclimatology and Paleoclimatology.</p> <p>Since 1820, scientists documented Earth's rotation slowing down, according to NASA. In the past few years, it began speeding up, McCarthy said.</p> <p>Why is the speed increasing?</p> <p>Researchers do not have a definitive answer on how or why Earth is turning slightly faster, but it may be due to glacial isostatic adjustment, or the movement of land due to melting glaciers, McCarthy said.</p> |

Earth is slightly wider than it is tall, which makes it an oblate spheroid, he said. The glaciers at the poles weigh down on the Earth's crust at the North and South poles, McCarthy said.

Since the poles are melting due to the climate crisis, there is less pressure on the top and bottom of the planet, which moves the crust up and makes the Earth rounder, he said. The circular shape helps the planet spin faster, McCarthy said.

It's the same phenomenon that figure skaters use to increase and decrease their speed, he said.

When skaters stretch their arms away from their body as they spin, it takes more force for them to rotate, he said. When they tuck their arms close to their body, their speed increases because their body mass is closer to their center of gravity, McCarthy said.

As Earth becomes rounder, its mass becomes closer to its center, which increases its rotational speed, he said.

Some have suggested a correlation with the Chandler wobble, McCarthy said. The axis our planet rotates on is not lined up with its axis of symmetry, an invisible vertical line that divides the Earth into two equal halves.

This creates a slight wobble as the Earth rotates, similar to how a football wobbles when it is thrown, he said.

When a player tosses a football, it wobbles slightly as it rotates since it often doesn't spin around the axis of symmetry, he said.

"If you're a really good passer in football, you line up the axis of rotation with the axis of symmetry of the football, and it doesn't wobble," McCarthy said.

However, McCarthy said the Chandler wobble likely does not affect the rotational speed of Earth because the wobble is due to the planet's shape. If the planet's shape changes, it changes the frequency of the wobble, not its rotation frequency, he said.

Removing a leap second

Since researchers began measuring the Earth's rotational speed using atomic clocks, Earth had been slowing down its rotational speed, McCarthy said.

"Our day-to-day existence doesn't even recognize that millisecond," McCarthy said. "But if these things add up, then it could change the rate at which we insert a leap second."

In the instances when the milliseconds build up over time, the scientific community has added a leap second to the clock to slow down our time to match Earth's, he said. There have been 27 leap seconds added since 1972, according to EarthSky.

Because Earth is now rotating faster, a leap second would need to be taken away to catch our timekeeping up with Earth's increasing rotational speed, McCarthy said.

If the planet continues this rotational trend, the removal of a leap second likely wouldn't need to happen for another three to four years, he said.

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| HEADLINE | 08/06 Woman calls 911 on Black man at his home |
| SOURCE | https://www.q13fox.com/news/white-woman-calls-police-on-black-man-standing-at-his-home |
| GIST | SEATTLE - A white woman was recorded while calling police to report a Black man who was standing outside his home just south of Seattle in White Center . |

The woman, who is not identified, is seen talking on the phone with police dispatch after confronting Dayson Barnes, who is Black, The Seattle Times [reported](#).

"If you guys have a lease, I'd just like to see the lease," the woman told Barnes and his partner in the video. The video was posted on Reddit on Wednesday by Barnes' partner and has been circulating on social media.

The recorded interaction is similar to other incidents depicting white women calling police on people of color for mundane activities.

[In 2020, a video of a white woman calling the police on a Black bird-watcher](#) in New York's Central Park went viral, with many viewing the incident as a reflection of the daily racism and life-threatening situations faced by people of color.

About 11:30 a.m. Wednesday, Barnes said a woman he recognized from down the street drove by his house as he was standing in the backyard. Barnes and his partner had moved into the home about three weeks ago, and said other neighbors noticed their U-Haul truck.

Barnes said he and the woman waved to each other, "as a normal neighbor would," but she came back and parked in front of the house.

Barnes said that when he approached her to ask if she needed something, the woman said she knew who lived in the home and accused him of not being a resident there. The woman told him he shouldn't be at the property, and called 911, he said.

Barnes then went into the house to retrieve his phone to film the interaction, and to tell his partner about the dispute, he said. Barnes said the woman's demeanor changed when she saw his partner, who is white.

"I'm a Black man, and me being out there alone and for me to go inside to get my white boyfriend, she felt she was in the wrong I guess and that there was a misunderstanding," Barnes said Friday. "I did get the sense of her trying to save face for herself and brush it under the rug."

Shortly after, [King County](#) Sheriff's Office deputies arrived to respond "to reports of a potential residential burglary," spokesperson Zoe Birkbeck told the newspaper.

"Dispatch advised responding deputies that the caller said that it was a misunderstanding however now a verbal disturbance had ensued," Birkbeck said.

In the video, Barnes' partner can be heard accusing the woman of calling the cops because "she saw a Black man walk in the house." The woman can be heard responding, "Oh my gosh this has nothing to do with race."

Barnes, however, said "It was obviously a race thing."

"I was wearing a hoodie because it's cold that morning, a black hoodie, and she thought I shouldn't be there, I was stealing from the house," he said.

Arriving deputies checked Barnes' identification and left after about five minutes. No official report was taken, according to Birkbeck.

Barnes and his partner moved to Seattle from Texas, where he said he was frequently racially profiled. White people called the cops on him a number of times when he was walking or running through certain neighborhoods, he said, an experience that always made him fearful of possible police interactions.

"I didn't think I'd have to experience this outside of the South," Barnes said.

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| HEADLINE | 08/06 Problem: more destructive, intense rainfalls |
| SOURCE | https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/08/06/many-places-are-seeing-more-intense-rainfall-thats-big-problem/ |
| GIST | <p>At one weather station in Fairbanks, Alaska, each hour of rainfall is about 50 percent more intense, on average, than it was a half-century ago. The Wichita area is experiencing rains about 40 percent more fierce these days. Huntington, W.Va., and Sioux City, Iowa, are seeing deluges roughly 30 percent more extreme than in 1970.</p> <p>Places around the nation are facing more frequent, more extreme precipitation over time — a reality laid bare once again by the record-shattering rains and catastrophic flooding in eastern Kentucky and St. Louis last week.</p> <p>The warming atmosphere is supercharging any number of weather-related disasters — wildfires, hurricanes, crippling heat waves. But as it also fuels once-unthinkable amounts of rain in single bursts, the problem of so much water arriving so quickly is posing serious challenges in a nation where the built environment is not only outdated but increasingly outmatched.</p> <p>“The infrastructure we have is really built for a climate we are not living in anymore,” said Andreas Prein, a scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) who studies extreme precipitation.</p> <p>From populated cities to rural outposts, the United States has long struggled with antiquated sewage and wastewater networks, outdated bridges and crumbling roads and culverts. But as more water falls from the sky more quickly in many places, those challenges have become only more urgent.</p> <p>“What happened was way more than the system — any system — can handle,” Sean Hadley, spokesman for the Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District, said of the recent storms that dumped more than 9 inches of rain there in a matter of hours, shattering the previous daily record from 1915.</p> <p>The record-crushing rain in St. Louis inundated storm drains and creeks. Sewage backed up into homes. The River des Peres swelled beyond its banks. The area’s sprawling drainage systems, parts of which date to the 19th century, were quickly overwhelmed.</p> <p>“It was just too much water,” Hadley said.</p> <p>An analysis of weather data by the nonprofit group Climate Central found that nearly three-quarters of locations the group examined around the country have experienced an increase in the amount of rain falling on their annual wettest day since 1950 — particularly along the Gulf Coast and Mid-Atlantic. The numbers show that 2021 was a record-setting year for extreme rainfall events, with dozens of places logging their wettest day in generations.</p> <p>A separate Climate Central report this spring found that of 150 locations the group analyzed, 90 percent now experience more average rainfall per hour, compared with 1970. Those increasing bursts of extreme precipitation carry profound economic and human health risks, the likes of which have been on display most recently in eastern Kentucky.</p> <p>Jen Brady, a data analyst for Climate Central, said many places around the country are getting roughly the same, or in some cases, less rain annually than in the past. But it is the sudden, relentless rainfalls that are contributing to flash floods and other problems.</p> <p>“The damage that’s happening doesn’t show up when you just look at [annual] precipitation records. It matters if you get 2 inches a day, versus 2 inches an hour,” Brady said. “Our infrastructure is not designed to hold that much water in that much time.”</p> |

Scientists say there is little doubt about what is driving the shift toward more frequent, more devastating rains: climate change.

“Individual events happen all the time and have happened all the time in our historical record. We need to be aware that just because we have an event doesn’t mean it represents something unusual,” said Kenneth Kunkel, an atmospheric sciences professor at North Carolina State University.

But while it remains difficult for researchers to outline the precise climate fingerprint on specific summer thunderstorms and other heavy-rain events, they are increasingly able to detail the climate impact on massive tropical cyclones such as Hurricane Harvey. What’s more, after decades of observing and analyzing precipitation metrics around the country, Kunkel says the numbers tell a clear story of change.

“There’s no doubt that the frequency and intensity of the extreme rainfall events is increasing,” Kunkel said, adding that the trend is especially strong in the eastern and central United States.

“When I started 30 years ago, a [climate] signal was emerging,” he said. “That signal has gotten stronger and stronger. ... The data are pretty definitive in showing that.”

The explanation boils down to what Kunkel calls “basic physics.” For every degree Fahrenheit that the air temperature increases, the atmosphere can hold about 4 percent more water.

The world already has warmed more than 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit (1 degree Celsius) since preindustrial times. That increased heat means more moisture in the air — in the United States, much of which comes off the Gulf of Mexico — and more fuel for more intense rainstorms.

“We’ve had an increase in the amount of atmospheric water vapor, ... so we are seeing more of these heavy rainfall events,” said David Easterling, a scientist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s National Centers for Environmental Information. “This is all very consistent with the notion of a warming atmosphere.”

It’s not that St. Louis, for instance, hasn’t had heavy rainstorms in the past. But these days, Easterling said, that same storm likely has access to a lot more moisture that can become torrential rain.

“What was really highly unusual 100 years ago is not that unusual anymore,” he said.

More heavy rains alone don’t automatically translate to more flooding. It matters whether the soil where rain falls is dry or already saturated, how populated the area is and whether the water has someplace to go.

In an urban area like St. Louis, the sheer amount of paved surfaces contributed to runoff that overwhelmed drainage systems. In eastern Kentucky, the steep terrain funneled cataclysmic amounts of water to flatter areas below, where most homes and people are.

No matter the geography, the more intense rains are posing a major planning, engineering and adaptation challenge on the ground.

One problem is that the country’s flood mapping and its collection of precipitation data are underfunded and outdated, and have long relied on “a very patchwork approach,” said Chad Berginnis, executive director for the Association of State Floodplain Managers.

That means engineers, planners and public works officials don’t always have access to the most accurate and up-to-date data about current risks — and those probably on the horizon.

Berginnis said some local governments with more resources — places such as Milwaukee, Nashville and Charlotte — have undertaken research to understand and plan for the water-related challenges they face. New York City also has invested in its own studies and in [measures](#) to better gird itself against heavier rains and rising seas.

“They are going to see less damage going forward,” Berginnis said. But not every place is so fortunate. “In rural areas or places that have less capacity, they are stuck with the data that is nationally available, and it’s just not that good,” he said. “Unfortunately, it’s kind of the haves and the have-nots in a lot of cases.”

The problem of more frequent and extreme precipitation is not only national but also global. Europe saw [deadly flooding](#) after severe rains last summer. Parts of Australia have endured [tremendous rainfall](#) in recent days, putting Sydney on track for its wettest year on record. Parts of China have experienced devastating floods this summer, fueled by rainfall that, at least in one area, [dumped 3.3 inches](#) in a single hour.

Across the globe, the torrents show few signs of slowing.

The federal government’s most recent National Climate Assessment found that, over the coming century, “observed increases in the frequency and intensity of heavy precipitation events in most parts of the United States are projected to continue.” The largest increases in intense precipitation events have occurred — and are expected to continue — in the Northeast and Midwest.

“These trends are consistent with what would be expected in a warmer world, as increased evaporation rates lead to higher levels of water vapor in the atmosphere, which in turn lead to more frequent and intense precipitation extremes,” scientists wrote.

That same assessment found that the nation’s water systems “face considerable risk even without anticipated future climate changes.” But with the changes, the risk will rise for dams and levees at risk of failure, for landslides and erosion on the West Coast, for more flooding in low-lying areas of the Midwest and Southeast, and more strain on old and overtaxed infrastructure in the Northeast.

For now, extreme precipitation events are likely to get only more extreme and more common unless the world makes rapid and drastic cuts in planet-heating emissions — something that has yet to materialize. Prein, the NCAR scientist, said that even if the world halts warming at 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) beyond preindustrial levels — a core aim of the Paris climate accord — rain and flood events are still likely to get worse in the near term.

“We cannot just shut down our greenhouse gas emissions immediately,” he said. “We will see these events become more intense in the next couple of decades, and there is very little we can do about that.”

That’s why investing in effective adaptation efforts and early warning systems is essential, he said. So is being more cautious about where and how humans build new developments and manage existing infrastructure. Because the heavy rains will come.

“It’s sad but true,” he said, “these kinds of events are our new normal.”

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| HEADLINE | 08/07 More human remains found Lake Mead |
| SOURCE | https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/07/us/more-skeletal-remains-at-lake-mead/index.html |
| GIST | (CNN) More human remains have been found in the receding waters of Lake Mead, authorities announced Saturday. This is the fourth time human remains have been found at Lake Mead National Recreation Area since May. |

In the latest incident, park rangers got a call Saturday morning about skeletal remains at Swim Beach area, National Park Service officials said in a statement.

Rangers set up a perimeter at the beach to recover the remains with help from divers from the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, according to the Park Service. A coroner was also called to determine the cause of death.

At least three different sets have previously been found at the lake, where water levels have plunged to [unprecedented lows](#) amid an unrelenting water crisis in the West.

The previous remains discovered, including a body that was [found in a corroding barrel with a gunshot wound](#), were in advanced stages of decomposition and thus difficult to extract DNA from, officials said.

It's unclear how long the latest remains found have been in the lake. The homicide division of Las Vegas Metropolitan Police is not currently handling the investigation, Lt. Jason Johansson [told CNN](#).

The police department is, however, leading the investigation into a different body, one found in the barrel on the lake's Hemenway Harbor on May 1. The body had an obvious gunshot wound and investigators immediately treated it as a homicide investigation, Johansson previously told CNN.

"Anytime you have a body in a barrel, clearly there was somebody else involved," he said.

Since then, Clark County Coroner Melanie Rouse has preliminarily ruled the cause and manner of death a homicide by gunshot. The remains, dubbed Hemenway Harbor Doe by the coroner's office, belonged to someone who died in the mid-'70s to early '80s, according to police.

A second set of remains -- found on May 7 at Calville Bay -- are believed to belong to someone who was approximately between ages 23 and 37, according to Rouse.

It's unclear how that person died. The Calville Bay remains are more skeletal than the other two sets, which both still have organ tissue available for examination, Rouse said.

A third set of remains -- [found at the lake's Swim Beach on July 25](#) -- are only partial and are still at early stages of examination, according to Rouse.

The lake straddles the border of Nevada and Arizona.

While the grim discoveries in the shrinking lake quickly generated theories of mob involvement, Johansson said those ideas are "mere speculation" at this point in the investigation.

A National Park Service spokesperson told CNN one possible explanation for the remains could be that they belong to people who previously drowned at the lake when water levels used to be high.

At its height in '80s, Lake Mead -- the largest manmade reservoir in the country -- was 1,225 feet above sea level. But as the mega-drought persists, water levels have plunged this year to the lowest level since the reservoir was filled in the 1930s.

Lake Mead was filled to just 27% of capacity as of July 18, 2022, according to [NASA](#).

Water levels have plummeted so much that, in addition to several bodies, they have exposed a [sunken World War II-era vessel](#), the Park Service announced in early July.

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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Ex-officer jailed for 'failing to intervene' |
| SOURCE | https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/07/us/officer-sentenced-woman-dementia-arrest.html |
| GIST | <p>A former Colorado police officer was sentenced to 45 days in jail and three years of probation on Friday for failing to intervene during the arrest of a 73-year-old woman with dementia who was assaulted by a different police officer in June 2020, a law firm representing the officer confirmed on Sunday.</p> <p>The officer, Daria Jalali, formerly of the Loveland Police Department, had pleaded guilty to failure to intervene with an officer using excessive force. The charge stemmed from a law created in 2020 as part of a police reform bill enacted in the wake of racial justice protests across the state and nation. The law requires police officers to stop other officers from using excessive force and to report such instances.</p> <p>Ms. Jalali was found to have failed to comply with the law after Austin Hopp, a former officer with the Loveland Police Department, assaulted Karen Garner, then 73, who had been arrested on suspicion of shoplifting \$13.88 worth of items from a Walmart. Ms. Garner has dementia and sensory aphasia, which impair her ability to understand and communicate, and she had forgotten to pay for the items, according to her lawyer. She was severely injured during the arrest.</p> <p>Anna Geigle, Ms. Jalali's lawyer, did not respond to a call seeking comment on Sunday.</p> <p>Eric Stewart, the interim chief of the Loveland Police Department, said in a statement that "this verdict does not change Ms. Garner's wrongful and illegal treatment or the pain she and her family have experienced."</p> <p>"I do hope this brings the next level of closure for Ms. Garner and her family," he added.</p> <p>The case was prosecuted by the district attorney's office for the Eighth Judicial District in Colorado, which did not respond to an email seeking comment on Sunday.</p> <p>A lawsuit filed last April against the city of Loveland stated that the officers who arrested Ms. Garner had broken a bone in her arm and dislocated her shoulder and that she had not been given medical attention for six hours.</p> <p>Mr. Hopp pleaded guilty to second-degree assault in March and was later sentenced to five years in prison and three years of parole. Last year the city of Loveland said it would pay a \$3 million settlement to Ms. Garner.</p> <p>In recent years, the Loveland Police Department has faced several lawsuits accusing officers of using excessive force while making arrests. In June, the father of a teenage girl sued three police officers, saying that, while arresting the 14-year-old, they had used excessive force by slamming her onto concrete, firing a Taser at him and choking the family's Jack Russell terrier.</p> <p>The release of the body camera footage in Ms. Garner's case last April reverberated across the city and country. The video showed Ms. Garner clutching wildflowers and her wallet, crying out in pain and appearing confused as she told the officers that she was "just going home."</p> <p>Mr. Hopp is seen grabbing Ms. Garner, bending her arm behind her back and throwing her to the ground. "I am going home," she said repeatedly while facedown on the grass, struggling and clutching her wallet. Mr. Hopp then leaned into her back with his knees, the lawsuit filed on her behalf says.</p> <p>Ms. Jalali, who arrived at the scene after Ms. Garner had been arrested, is also seen in the video. She tells Ms. Garner, "Stand up, we're not going to hold you," and repeatedly shouts for her to "quit."</p> |

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| | <p>The city of Loveland said in a statement last April that it had received “an abundance of telephone calls, emails, and social media messages from constituents deeply concerned” about what the video showed.</p> <p>“The footage is difficult to watch and we understand the strong emotions evoked including the outrage, fear, and distrust,” the city said at the time.</p> <p>Judge Joshua B. Lehman of the Eighth Judicial District Court described Ms. Jalali’s actions as “an abysmal failure of that duty to protect and serve,” CBS News Colorado reported.</p> <p>Alissa Swartz, Ms. Garner’s daughter, told reporters on Friday that Ms. Jalali had “failed in every aspect of what she did” on June 26, 2020.</p> <p>“It sums up the whole thing,” Ms. Swartz said. “She failed.”</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/08 New trial Gov. Whitmer kidnap plot |
| SOURCE | https://apnews.com/article/biden-michigan-donald-trump-adam-fox-whitmer-kidnap-plot-trial-273bf142e510c62f7c697d5ecf135239 |
| GIST | <p>Two men accused of crafting a plan to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in 2020 and ignite a national rebellion are facing a second trial this week, months after a jury couldn’t reach a verdict on the pair while acquitting two others.</p> <p>The result in April was a blow to federal prosecutors, who had set out to show that extremists were committed to snatching Whitmer and causing chaos close to the election between Joe Biden and then-President Donald Trump.</p> <p>The trial of Adam Fox and Barry Croft Jr. means another public airing of secretly recorded conversations, text messages and chilling social media posts. It also comes at a time of intense news coverage of the U.S. House committee investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, riot by Trump supporters at the Capitol.</p> <p>Jurors will see how undercover FBI agents and informants had infiltrated the Michigan group. In response, defense attorneys again will argue that Fox and Croft were shielded by the First Amendment when they expressed malicious opinions about government and were entrapped every step of the way.</p> <p>“The stakes are higher because the government has doubled down,” Matthew Schneider, a former U.S. attorney in Detroit, said of the second trial. “They’re going to try this all over again, and the government’s view is, ‘We’re going to prevail.’”</p> <p>Also in the background: Whitmer’s reelection campaign for a second term is heating up. Jury selection starts Tuesday in federal court in Grand Rapids, Michigan.</p> <p>“This is like deja vu all over again,” U.S. District Judge Robert Jonker said.</p> <p>The government alleges that Fox, who was living under a Grand Rapids-area vacuum shop, and Croft, a trucker from Bear, Delaware, wanted to target Whitmer as well as other public officials over their tough restrictions during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>A handmade “shoot house” was erected for weekend gun drills. There’s evidence that Croft, Fox and undercover operatives took a night ride to northern Michigan to check Whitmer’s second home and discuss putting an explosive under a bridge. Two men who pleaded guilty will testify again for prosecutors.</p> |

"I'm gonna hit soon," Croft was heard saying during a June 2020 meeting of antigovernment activists in Ohio. "I'm going to terrorize people. The right people. The people who have been terrorizing my people."

Fox and Croft are charged with conspiracy. The first trial ended in a mistrial when the jury couldn't reach a unanimous verdict against them. The jury, however, acquitted Daniel Harris and Brandon Caserta.

Caserta's attorney, Michael Hills, said the second trial will be "shorter and more focused" with two people instead of four.

"Defending a second time is always difficult for the defense," Hills said. "They've got everything against them, the power of the government."

The judge said he won't mention the result of the first trial during jury selection. But if prospective jurors say they're aware of it, Jonker will ask if it would affect their ability to be fair and impartial. The "jury really needs to understand its decision needs to be based on the evidence in this case, not what happened in some other case," Jonker told the lawyers.

Whitmer, a Democrat, said little publicly after the first trial but opened up to The Washington Post during a [recent interview](#).

"Does anyone think these kidnappers wanted to keep me or ransom me?" Whitmer said. "No. They were going to put me on trial and then execute me. It was an assassination plot, but no one talks about it that way. Even the way people talk about it has muted the seriousness of it."

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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Saudis execute 80 inmates mass beheading |
| SOURCE | https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/saudi-arabia-executes-80-prisoners-27679510 |
| GIST | <p>Saudi Arabia has already slaughtered 120 prisoners in the first six blood-soaked months of 2022.</p> <p>In the first half of the year, the Gulf country's execution rate spiked - returning the amount of people put to the sword to pre-Covid levels.</p> <p>Rights groups fear the rapid escalation of death penalties, which have reportedly been carried out by beheading in the past, could see the country break its grim record of 186 killings throughout the whole of 2019.</p> <p>The 120 people killed between January and June represents an 80 per cent increase when compared to all executions carried out during 2021, and more than during 2020 and 2021 combined.</p> <p>The European Saudi Organization for Human Rights has slammed the country's justice system, claiming it has betrayed promises to reduce torture and killings in its penal system.</p> <p>The ESOHR says the lack of transparency in the system meant that they only learned of the killings after they'd taken place.</p> <p>In its report, the group drew attention to a mass beheading of 81 criminals on March 12 - when more than 70 per cent of the victims were killed for their involvement in non-fatal crimes.</p> <p>Of the total number killed, 41 men - over 50 per cent - were slaughtered for taking part in pro-democracy demonstrations.</p> <p>To justify the killings, the Saudi leadership branded the men "terrorists" before putting them before their executioner.</p> |

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| | <p>The ESOHR reported that at least three of the men provided credible claims they had been tortured and their confessions forced.</p> <p>Out of 120 sent to die, 101 were Saudi nationals, with the other 19 comprising of nine Yemenis, three Egyptians, two Indonesians and a "citizen from each of Ethiopia, Myanmar, Jordan, Palestine and Syria."</p> <p>The vast majority of them were "tried and executed for punitive crimes" despite promises from the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to cut down the severity of sentence for these charges.</p> <p>Forty-one were killed for exercising "basic rights, including participation in demonstrations", the report adds.</p> <p>Another 37 convicts were put to the sword for "unknown" crimes, the report charges, claiming that this "reflects the lack of transparency in the Saudi justice system".</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/06 Pollution crime, organized crime groups |
| SOURCE | https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/climate-security/pollution-crime-report-reveals-links-to-transnational-organized-crime-groups/ |
| GIST | <p>Throughout a series of global law enforcement operations that INTERPOL has coordinated against pollution crime in recent years, a key observation has emerged – that transnational organized crime was likely involved in a number of cases.</p> <p>The exact nature and implications of organized crime groups' role in pollution crime on a global level, however, has not been clear enough.</p> <p>A new INTERPOL report targets this information gap with an in-depth examination of 27 pollution crime case studies shared by law enforcement in INTERPOL member countries. While most of the cases come from European countries, investigations demonstrate that the organized crime-pollution crime nexus is a global phenomenon, involving a wide variety of perpetrators and organizational structures.</p> <p>Illegal pollution is a highly profitable and serious crime, with devastating consequences for communities, the environment, legitimate businesses and the rule of law. In the cases examined by the INTERPOL report, the proceeds of the pollution offenses ranged from \$175,000 to \$58 million, corresponding to an average of \$19.6 million for each case.</p> <p>The proceeds of the 27 pollution crime cases combined are estimated to amount to half a billion U.S. dollars. Equally alarming are the costs to clean up and decontaminate illegal pollution sites, which ranged from \$6 million to \$37 million (\$15.6 million on average) according to the cases examined.</p> <p>To facilitate pollution offenses, perpetrators systematically commit a series of document frauds and financial crimes, including tax evasion and money laundering. In some cases requiring the complicity of public officials, perpetrators also resort to bribery, extortion and fraud.</p> <p>Transnational networks are often key to pollution offenses. In one case, organized crime groups illegally exported municipal waste from the United Kingdom and dumped it in Poland, fraudulently claiming to dispose of the waste in legitimate U.K.-based sites, as they were paid to do. The illegal dumping resulted in an estimated 30-40 waste fires in Poland.</p> <p>In Spain, a company imported waste tires from other European countries then re-sold them as second hand tires to countries in Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America. This despite the fact that the tires were improperly stored in dangerous conditions and not up to code. The company did not declare</p> |

importing the tires to avoid taxes and laundered their profits through real estate, vehicles, jewelry and virtual currencies.

Pollution crime, the report concludes, is often an organized crime, conducted with innovative, adaptive and sophisticated methods, but does not always take the form one might expect. While some cases did involve centralized mafia or gang-style criminal groups, the large majority of suspects were businessmen and women operating under the cover of a legitimate firm, or as a network of individual brokers.

This de-centralized structure reflects the way that much cross-border business is done, involving global value chains in which services are regularly subcontracted across a largely 'horizontal' network of economic actors.

Some of the legitimate companies in these networks shift towards illegal business practices and commit pollution offenses to increase their profit margins, with or without the knowledge of other companies linked to them.

The picture that emerges is one where different forms of pollution crime often coexist and blend with legitimate operators. This does not, however, make the crime any less organized, or any less damaging.

A majority of the cases examined by the INTERPOL report were cross-border, underscoring the importance of international police cooperation to combating pollution crime.

Pollution offenses have sometimes been characterized as high-profit and low-risk, in part because of the many challenges to policing such crimes and the limited prosecutions registered to date. Common challenges for law enforcement include cooperation gaps between police and environmental regulatory authorities, a lack of specialized training, the low prioritization of pollution enforcement in many countries and legal obstacles when pollution crime is not one of the predicate, or 'serious', offenses that can be prosecuted under organized crime laws.

To overcome such hurdles, the INTERPOL report recommends attributing greater attention to pollution crime investigations, integrating the tools and techniques used against organized and financial crime. This could be done through multi-disciplinary training of investigators or establishing permanent multi-agency task forces.

Moreover, national enforcement agencies should undertake systematic data collection and analysis on the companies and criminal networks charged with pollution crime in order to conduct intelligence-led operations, focusing on high-value targets.

The strategic report was made possible through financial support from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) to INTERPOL's Environmental Security programme, which supports law enforcement agencies in INTERPOL's 195 member countries to prevent, detect and disrupt environmental crimes and dismantle the criminal groups behind them.

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[Download the full report at INTERPOL](#)

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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Snohomish-area man fatally shot; arrest |
| SOURCE | https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/snohomish-area-man-fatally-shot-suspect-surrenders-after-standoff/ |
| GIST | <p>A Snohomish-area man in his late 50s died Sunday after what police said was a domestic-violence shooting that led to the suspect barricading himself on the property.</p> <p>Between 10 and 15 Snohomish County Sheriff's deputies, some of them SWAT-team members, responded to the 6500 block of 57th Avenue Southeast about 11:45 a.m., according to Lt. Tom Morris.</p> |

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| | <p>The deputies talked to the 30-year-old suspect, and he surrendered a little over an hour later and was taken into custody, Morris said.</p> <p>The victim was taken from the scene in an aid car to get medical attention, but died he on the way, according to Morris.</p> <p>Morris said he could not elaborate on the relationship between the victim and the suspect, whose names were not yet released. Major crimes detectives are investigating the case.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Cops battle violent crime as ranks dwindle |
| SOURCE | https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/We-re-triaging-Cops-combat-violent-crime-as-17358248.php |
| GIST | <p>PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Five years after Brian Spaulding’s parents found him fatally shot, his slaying remains a mystery that seems increasingly unlikely to be solved as Portland, Oregon, police confront a spike in killings and more than 100 officer vacancies.</p> <p>Portland’s homicide rate surged 207% since 2019 and detectives working older cases are now swamped with new ones.</p> <p>“To us, it’s not a cold case,” said George Spaulding, who has his son’s signature tattooed on his arm. “We’re not dissatisfied with the Police Bureau because I think they’re doing the best they can,” he said. “They are just overwhelmed. It’s insane.”</p> <p>From Philadelphia to Portland to Los Angeles, killings and gun violence are rising at the same time officers worn out by the pandemic and disillusioned over the calls to divest from policing are quitting or retiring faster than they can be replaced.</p> <p>Departments are scrambling to recruit in a tight labor market and also rethinking what services they can provide. Many have shifted veteran officers to patrol, breaking up specialized teams to keep up with 911 calls.</p> <p>“We’re getting more calls for service and there are fewer people to answer them,” said Philadelphia Police spokesperson Eric Gripp, whose department has been rotating employees from specialty units to increase patrols.</p> <p>“Departments all over are down and recruitment has been difficult.”</p> <p>Los Angeles, which is down more than 650 officers from its pre-pandemic staffing, shuttered its animal cruelty unit and downsized its human trafficking, narcotics and gun details and reduced its homeless outreach teams by 80%. Seattle recently announced \$2 million in hiring bonuses and benefits to lure recruits amid a critical officer shortage.</p> <p>“For me, I wonder, what the profession is going to be 20 years from now if we’re having these challenges on a nationwide scale. Are we going to be able to recruit enough people to serve our cities?” asked Portland Police Chief Chuck Lovell, whose force has lost 237 sworn officers through retirements or resignations since 2020.</p> <p>Portland logged a record 89 homicides last year — roughly three times its historical average — and is on pace to top that this year after already tallying more than 50. A report completed for the city last month by the California Partnership for Safe Communities found 75% of homicides in 2020 were by gun. The city has seen nearly 800 shootings this year.</p> <p>That follows a national trend. While non-violent crime decreased during the pandemic, the murder rate increased nearly 30% in 2020 and the rate of assaults went up 10%, according to the Brennan Center for Justice.</p> |

It's unclear what's driving the surge, but COVID-19 created huge social disruption and upended government and community support systems. Gun sales also spiked during the pandemic.

Experts say widely cited theories that violent crime is worse in places that changed policing tactics in the wake of protests over Floyd's murder don't bear out. Violent crime has increased in red and blue communities alike, regardless of their approach.

"There's a lot of evidence that something bigger is going on than the social justice protests that happened, and it's probably more than one thing," said Ben Struhl, executive director of the Crime and Justice Policy Lab at the University of Pennsylvania.

Jeremiah King, who is transitioning out of homelessness, was shot while trying to protect a friend in Portland who was being attacked just a short walk from the city's business district.

"I didn't feel anything at first but 10 seconds later I could hardly breathe," King said after three nights in the hospital. "I thought I was going to pass away."

To address the violence, Portland's police chief broke up specialized units to bolster patrol numbers and moved detectives from assault, cold case and gun violence units to his homicide squad. That effectively stopped investigations into about 300 unsolved slayings.

Brian Spaulding's parents now must consider the possibility that one day no one will be assigned to their son's case.

"I keep thinking that with all of the gun violence that's going on, they might be able to get a gun that matches the gun that killed Brian," said Carolyn Spaulding.

But what law enforcement says is a staffing crisis could actually be a case of misdirected resources, said Christy Lopez, co-director of Georgetown Law School's Center for Innovations in Community Safety.

In some departments, police have sworn in new recruits this year, although the numbers aren't keeping up with attrition, they say.

"You really can't take it at face value when a department says you need more police officers. You need to look at a staffing audit: 'What are your police officers doing? What are they unable to do?' It might mean that you actually need another Boys and Girls Club, not more officers," she said.

Some have celebrated the downsizing, including homeless advocates in Los Angeles, where four out of five homeless outreach teams were disbanded.

"Police should be nowhere around outreach. You can't be the provider of services as well as the jailer," said Pete White, the founder and executive director of the Los Angeles Community Action Network.

Still many others are fed up with perceived lack of action by police.

In Philadelphia, where the department is down 550 officers from pre-pandemic staffing and another 860 are on medical leave or restricted duty, City Councilwoman Maria Quiñones-Sánchez said there are more than 30,000 backlogged police complaints about abandoned cars.

Officers normally assigned to a unit dealing with neighborhood issues have been shifted to violent hot spots, where the homicide rate reached a record high last year.

The abandoned cars bring "trash in the areas, then you know other crimes, quality of life issues, drug dealing, shootings, killings," said Kimberly Washington, executive director of the Frankford Community Development Corporation. "This starts to look like the place where this can all go down because no one cares."

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| | <p>Royal Harris knows what that's like.</p> <p>Growing up in Portland's gang territory in the 1990s, his brother, two first cousins, two second cousins and numerous friends were shot to death — and many of those cases remain unsolved.</p> <p>Harris supports the temporary shut-down of the city's cold case unit if it means police can close fresh cases, even though it takes resources from solving his own loved ones' slayings.</p> <p>"Under the current climate, somebody's going to feel cheated and we have to be honest with that. The question is, who do we cheat?" he said. "These hard decisions (have) to be made to stop this."</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/08 Atlanta park shooting: 1 killed, 5 injured |
| SOURCE | https://www.foxnews.com/us/atlanta-park-shooting-1-killed-5-others-injured-including-6-year-old-child |
| GIST | <p>An argument at a park in southwest Atlanta Sunday evening led to a deadly mass shooting in which six people were shot, including a 6-year-old who was critically injured.</p> <p>Officers responded to reports of a person shot at Dunbar Recreation Center inside Rosa L. Burney Park at around 7 p.m., Atlanta Police said. They found multiple people shot when they arrived at the scene.</p> <p>A baseball or softball game was being played at the park when the shooting took place.</p> <p>"There was some type of baseball or softball game going on at the park. There was an argument that ensued and the next thing you know, there was an exchange in gunfire," Deputy Chief Charles Hampton Jr. said Sunday.</p> <p>The victims of the shooting include a man in his 30s who was killed and a 6-year-old in critical condition, Hampton Jr. said.</p> <p>The child was transported to the Children's Healthcare of Atlanta - Egleston Hospital for treatment, police said.</p> <p>"As we've said countless times, we're just asking the citizens just to find a way to resolve conflict without weapons," Hampton Jr. said.</p> <p>"We're just asking people to, you know, step away. We're asking people just to let bygones be bygones," he continued.</p> <p>No arrests have been made in connection with the shooting. Information about a potential suspect was not made available.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/08 Colorado deputy fatally shot, call response |
| SOURCE | https://www.foxnews.com/us/colorado-deputy-shot-killed-line-duty-police-search-suspect |
| GIST | <p>A Colorado sheriff's department confirmed they are searching for a suspect after one of their deputies was shot and killed in the line of duty.</p> <p>Deputy Andrew Peery from the El Paso County Sheriff's Office responded to a shooting when a suspect opened fire. He was shot and later died of his injuries. The altercation happened in Widefield, Colorado, around 5:30 p.m. on Sunday night.</p> <p>The sheriff's department issued a shelter-in-place order shortly after the shooting happened. The office recommended that residents lock their doors and cover their windows.</p> |

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| | <p>The department said they are "actively looking" for John Paz, a Hispanic male, as a suspect in the shooting.</p> <p>Governor Jared Polis issued a statement in response to the tragedy.</p> <p>"My thoughts and condolences are with the family and friends of Deputy Peery and all our neighbors in law enforcement who put their lives at risk to serve others," Gov. Polis said.</p> <p>Colorado State Patrol (CSP) also responded Deputy Peery's death.</p> <p>"Our broken hearts are with the [El Paso County Sheriff's Office] and the blood and blue family of fallen Deputy Peery. EOW watch, sir," said CSP.</p> <p>Deputy Peery was 39 years old and is survived by his wife Megan and two children.</p> <p>Sheriff Bill Elder said Deputy Peery was a highly dedicated SWAT operator and has been with the sheriff's office since 2016, Fox 21 reported.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Manhunt Ohio killing of 4 ends in arrest |
| SOURCE | https://www.thedailybeast.com/stephen-marlow-accused-of-killing-4-in-butler-township-over-mind-control-is-nabbed?ref=home |
| GIST | <p>A two-day manhunt for the suspect accused of gunning down four people in two houses in Ohio—allegedly because he believed he was the victim of mind control—has ended with his arrest in Kansas.</p> <p>Stephen Marlow, 39, was nabbed in Lawrence shortly before 9 p.m. on Saturday when a police officer on alert for the fugitive spotted his vehicle and followed him into a parking lot.</p> <p>The arrest came a day after Marlow allegedly went on a rampage 650 miles away in Butler Township, outside Dayton, Ohio, killing Clyde Knox, 82, and his wife Eva, 78, in one home and Sarah Anderson, 41, and her daughter, Kayla Anderson, a 15-year-old high school student, in another.</p> <p>"This is the first violent crime in this neighborhood in recent memory," Butler Police Chief John Porter said Saturday. "We are working to determine if there was any motive to this horrible tragedy or if mental illness played any role."</p> <p>Porter said he was aware of a TikTok video in which Marlow appeared to provide his explanation of the slayings, identifying himself as a "targeted individual" and claiming he was a victim of mind control.</p> <p>In the video, Marlow said he was planning a "counterattack" and would "gladly die to expose this."</p> <p>"Targeted individuals" is the phrase used by a community of people connected over the internet who suffer from paranoid delusions of mind control and gang-stalking. They may believe that nefarious forces are using implanted chip or sonic waves to torture them. In Porter's case, he claimed "attackers" used "ventriloquism" to control their thoughts.</p> <p>Marlow will now be extradited to Ohio to face charges.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Downtown Cincinnati shooting: 9 injured |
| SOURCE | https://abcnews.go.com/US/13-injured-shooting-downtown-cincinnati/story?id=88057531 |
| GIST | At least nine people were injured in a shooting in Cincinnati, Ohio, in the early hours of Sunday, police said. |

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| | <p>Officers were already on the scene to disperse a "large disorderly crowd" when gunfire broke out at about 1:45 a.m. near the 1300 block of Main Street in the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood, according to a press release from the Cincinnati Police Department.</p> <p>The gunfire occurred following a physical altercation between two groups in the crowd, and at least two individuals exchanged gunfire near, police said.</p> <p>The nine victims were transported to the University of Cincinnati Medical Center and were treated for non-life threatening injuries, police said.</p> <p>"Today's events are completely and totally unacceptable," Cincinnati Mayor Aftab Pureval said in a statement. "The use of guns to solve disputes cannot become a normal part of our culture."</p> <p>Pureval commended the officers on the scene for their quick response, whose actions "likely saved many more from injury and prevented the loss of life," the mayor said.</p> <p>The investigation is ongoing, police said.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/07 Killer targets Muslim men in Albuquerque? |
| SOURCE | https://www.krqe.com/news/crime/apd-to-hold-press-conference-on-recent-muslim-homicides/ |
| GIST | <p>ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (KRQE) – The Albuquerque Police Department announced they would be holding a press conference regarding the recent murders of three Muslim men in Albuquerque. And now, a fourth Muslim man has been killed following a shooting Friday night.</p> <p>Police say this deadly shooting is extremely similar to the others and believe men of Middle Eastern descent are being targeted. "We can not denounce strongly enough what appears to be the targeting of people because of their race and religion," said Michelle Melendez of the Office of Equity and Inclusion during the press conference.</p> <p>APD has not released the victim's identity from Friday night's homicide but says he was ambushed, then shot – just like the other three murders of Muslim men. The first happened back in November, the other three have been within the past two weeks.</p> <p>Because of the similarities, it's all hands on deck for APD, the FBI, and other jurisdictions as they work together to figure out who is pulling the trigger. Albuquerque police say they are increasing patrols in certain areas of the city and adding command posts, with multiple divisions and bureaus working this case.</p> <p>Until the suspect or suspects are caught, the Muslim community is in fear. "Our community has been devastated, as you can imagine. We have never gone through anything like this," said Ahmad Assed, president of the Islamic Center of New Mexico. "This is really a surreal time for us."</p> <p>Police still cannot say if these are considered hate crimes and probably won't have that answer until they have a killer behind bars, but they do believe these men were targeted because of their race and religion. Officials do not have a suspect description but ask the community to be vigilant of suspicious behavior moving forward.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/06 Auburn police: drive-by shooting injures 3 |
| SOURCE | https://komonews.com/news/local/suspect-sought-after-3-wounded-in-auburn-early-saturday-during-drive-by-shooting-police |
| GIST | AUBURN, Wash. — Police in Auburn were searching for a suspect after three people were wounded early Saturday during a drive-by shooting that followed some type of dispute, at a party authorities said. |

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| | <p>Officers were called shortly after midnight Saturday to the 2600 block of Union Court SE after reports of gunfire, according to investigators.</p> <p>When they arrived, they found three people who had been shot. Two of the victims were shot in the leg and one person suffered a gunshot wound to the arm, a police spokesperson said.</p> <p>Two of the victims were rushed for treatment to Harborview Medical Center and the injuries for all three were believed to be non-life-threatening, according to the police spokesperson. It was not clear where the third victim was taken for treatment.</p> <p>Information about their conditions was pending and investigators have not identified either of the victims.</p> <p>Police said they had limited information about the suspect and it was believed that the gunfire occurred after a confrontation at a party.</p> <p>Police have not said the victims knew the person who shot them or what the dispute was about.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/06 Seattle police investigate 3 shootings |
| SOURCE | https://komonews.com/news/local/man-shot-and-killed-in-the-university-district-seattle-police-investigating https://komonews.com/news/local/west-seattle-man-shot-after-confronting-alleged-car-prowlers https://komonews.com/news/local/man-found-with-fatal-gunshot-wound-in-seattles-mount-baker-neighborhood |
| GIST | <p>SEATTLE - Seattle Police say they are searching for a suspect after a 30-year-old man was shot and killed early Saturday morning.</p> <p>Detectives responded to the shooting in the area of NE 42nd St and 7th Ave NE around 1 a.m. Medics attempted life-saving measures on the man but he was declared dead at the scene.</p> <p>Homicide detectives are investigating. Anyone with information is asked to contact the violent crimes tip line at 206-233-5000.</p> <p>Seattle Police responded to two other shootings Saturday morning including a shooting in West Seattle and a fatal shooting near Mount Baker.</p> <hr/> <p>SEATTLE - Seattle Police say they are searching for two suspects accused of shooting a man after he confronted them for trying to break into his car.</p> <p>Officers responded to the shooting in the North Admiral neighborhood of West Seattle near 42nd Ave SW and SW Hill St around 2 a.m. Saturday.</p> <p>The victim, a 28-year-old man, told police that he heard someone breaking into his car so he went outside to investigate. When he confronted the two suspects, he was shot in the back.</p> <p>Police say the man was transported to Harborview Medical Center with a life-threatening injury.</p> <p>Both suspects fled before police arrived.</p> <hr/> <p>SEATTLE - Seattle Police are investigating after a man was found with a fatal gunshot wound in Seattle's Mount Baker neighborhood early Saturday morning.</p> <p>Police responded to Lake Washington Blvd S and Lake Park Drive S around 4:45 a.m. for reports of a person shot. When officers arrived they found a man in a car with a gunshot wound.</p> |

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| | <p>Medics attempted life-saving measures but the man was declared dead at the scene.</p> <p>The driver of the vehicle says he drove the victim to that area, but the shooting happened elsewhere.</p> <p>Detectives are searching for evidence and the shooting is under investigation.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/05 Arrests: SUV drives thru ceremonial parade |
| SOURCE | https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/aug/05/new-mexico-native-american-parade |
| GIST | <p>Police have arrested several people who were in a large SUV that drove through a Native American celebration in New Mexico, causing multiple injuries along a parade route crowded with families. Two local police officers were among those hurt.</p> <p>The Navajo Nation president, Jonathan Nez, and his family were among those almost hit as a large car drove barreled through.</p> <p>Police took the driver into custody on Thursday evening but have yet to release details about why the vehicle was speeding through downtown Gallup as thousands of people lined the parade route, although a 33-year-old man who was arrested was charged with driving while intoxicated.</p> <p>Many captured the chaotic scene on video. People were yelling for others to get out of the way while some pushed paradegoers to safety.</p> <p>Children performing traditional dances appear to have been among the first to see it rushing toward them. They can be seen running to the side as people scream and families scramble to get out of the way.</p> <p>Blankets, shoes, banners and umbrellas were left strewn along the street and on the sidewalks as people fled.</p> <p>Nez said the vehicle was coming at him and a group of tribal officials who were walking in the parade. He thanked people for their quick action.</p> <p>“We just ask for your prayers for all of the participants,” Nez said in a video posted on social media. “We’re all shook up. You would see this on television, you would think it would never happen here. I’m sorry to say it happened here in Gallup, New Mexico.”</p> <p>Police said no one was killed and they did not have details on Friday about the conditions of those who were injured.</p> <p>After speeding down the parade route, the vehicle then swerved on to a side street and pulled into a parking spot before trying to pull out again, hitting a police car. Officers then converged on the vehicle, pulling at least two people out and handcuffing them on the pavement.</p> <p>The parade was a highlight of the Gallup intertribal ceremonial centennial celebration, which was founded in 1922 to honor Indigenous heritage.</p> <p>Nez said there were people who had traveled to Gallup from around the Navajo Nation to attend the parade and the other events planned over the course of the celebration.</p> <p>The Navajo Nation spans parts of New Mexico, Arizona and Utah.</p> <p>Nez, tribal council members and others expressed their anger and disbelief that something like this could happen.</p> <p>“It’s supposed to be a celebration, but today it was a difficult time for us,” he said.</p> |

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| | <p>Videos show the large brown vehicle speeding down a main street in Gallup, against the direction of the parade.</p> <p>Children performing traditional dances at the parade, to celebrate the town's 100th annual inter-tribal ceremony, appear to have been among the first to see the vehicle rushing toward them.</p> <p>They ran to the side as people screamed and families scrambled to escape.</p> <p>The event was founded a century ago to honor Native American and Indigenous heritage.</p> |
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| HEADLINE | 08/05 Mayors criticize King Co. jail low bookings |
| SOURCE | https://www.q13fox.com/news/mayors-put-pressure-on-king-county-jail-to-start-accepting-booking-get-offenders-off-the-street |
| GIST | <p>SEATTLE - The King County jail system is facing more public – and now mayoral pressure – to hold more inmates in custody and investigate why the number of jail-related deaths have been increasing.</p> <p>In an open letter released on Thursday, the mayors of eight south King County cities complained about a broken justice system.</p> <p>"When did the rights of the person who's choosing to shoot up in one of our parks become more important than the rights of the child who wants to use that park to play?" It's backwards," Auburn Mayor Nancy Backus told FOX 13.</p> <p>The letter also included criticism of bookings, or the lack of them at the two King County Jails "The Regional Justice Center has been closed off to south county cities for booking, which is really unacceptable," said Federal Way Mayor Jim Ferrell, who is also a candidate for King County Prosecutor.</p> <p>Both the jail at the RJC in Kent and in downtown Seattle are suffering staffing shortages. The number of correction officers with King County Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention is down 10% for budgeted levels for 2022.</p> <p>The jail has intentionally kept the jail's population down for social distancing purposes. Prior to the pandemic, the jail population was hovering around 1,900 people</p> <p>Then came policies of not keeping people arrested for non-violent offenses and other measures to keep the population around 1,300. Now that the courts are ramping back up from a pandemic closure, more cases are being filed by prosecutors and the jail's population has claimed to an average of 1,600 inmates a day.</p> <p>"If the county, the prosecutor and the jail level aren't right, again, if any one of those pieces is missing, the system doesn't work" said Kent Mayor Dana Ralph.</p> <p>In response to the mayors' letter, a spokesman for King County Executive Dow Constantine defended the choice to put fewer people behind bars.</p> <p>"We will continue to partner with any government committed to working productively to deliver safety rather than clinging to obsolete practices and mindsets that no longer keep our communities safe," said Chase Gallagher, Director of Communications.</p> <p>There's also the issue of recent suicides and jail-related deaths.</p> <p>"You know, every fatality is a tragedy," John Diaz, the Director of King County Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention told the Law and Justice Committee of the King County Council in June.</p> |

A 59-year-old man was taken to Harborview Medical Center on July 28 from the jail. He [died five days later of unknown circumstances](#) as of this writing.

His is at least the [sixth jail-related death in 2022](#). At least three have been suicides.

"Unfortunately, these deaths that have occurred - suspected by suicide - actually have not occurred in places where we have deemed people at most risk," Danobra McBride, the Director of King County Jail Health Services to the King County Council committee.

Starting in 2021, jails across the state have to report the results of all jail-related deaths to the public for better transparency.

Diaz says the county is working hard to find correction officers to fill vacant positions and may change inmate observation practices in light of the recent death.

"We've been single bunking almost everybody for two years and for very good reasons to protect people from COVID, but I think that does add to isolation," said Diaz of the death. "I'm excited to say that we are working on getting everyone (jail inmates) a tablet for entertainment purposes and to help them get a job when they get out."

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